

# The Belgian Photonovel, 1954-1985

An Introduction

*Clarissa Colangelo*



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**STUDIES IN  
EUROPEAN COMICS  
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# **The Belgian Photonovel, 1954-1985**

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*Clarissa Colangelo*

LEUVEN UNIVERSITY PRESS

The publication of this work was supported by KU Leuven Fund for Fair Open Access.

Published in 2023 by Leuven University Press / Presses Universitaires de Louvain / Universitaire Pers Leuven. Minderbroedersstraat 4, B-3000 Leuven (Belgium).

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ISBN 978 94 6270 370 4 (Paperback)

ISBN 978 94 6166 511 9 (ePDF)

ISBN 978 94 6166 512 6 (ePUB)

<https://doi.org/10.11116/9789461665119>

D/2023/1869/23

NUR: 617

Typesetting: Crius Group

Cover design: Johan Van Looveren

Cover illustration: Collage of covers of popular women's magazines



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# Time-traveling in a lost world

**I**n the French publishing industry today photonovels are everywhere. After the high-cultural intermezzo of the 1980s, where inventive photographers like Belgian Marie-Françoise Plissart, often in collaboration with scriptwriter Benoît Peeters, had produced superb examples of visual narratives competing with the sophistication of the French New Novel,<sup>1</sup> the genre has come once again to the fore in very different forms and formats. All of them have in common redefining the scope and breadth of the classic photonovel, drawing it always farther away from the exceptionally successful commercial formula of the romance comics-with-pictures formula that dominated the magazine market for more than two decades (1947–1968).

Today, the photonovel has dramatically changed and diversified. We find photonovels in the sphere of graphic journalism, as shown in monthlies such as *XXI* or the books by Vincent Jarousseau. They play a key role in the increasing hybridization of comics and graphic novels, where the mix of drawings and photographs is no longer a marginal phenomenon. In the mainstream segment of this production, the success of Guibert and Lefèvre's *The Photographer* has been a turning point and ever since many comic artists happily include actual pictures (in old-school comics, pictures were often used as source material and actively copied and plagiarized in drawings, but not for that matter visible on the page). Autofiction, memoir and life narrative in general, both online and offline, frequently rely on photographic elements, techniques and models. Specialized series have been launched, by larger as well as smaller publishing companies (for instance Le Seuil or FLBLB, in either case with sometimes heavily ironical references to the old-fashioned romance photonovels). Finally, the art world, after the first wave of sequential photography of the 1970s, with Duane Michals as its most prominent representative, has also embraced the genre as part of its toolbox, giving new and widely varying twists and turns to the almost forgotten photonovel as can be seen in the work of, among many others, Sophie Calle or Lia Rochas-Pàris.



Granted, the contemporary variations on the genre can be seen as the continuation as well as a reinterpretation of the high-art attempts by Plissart and others to give new life to a vanishing publication format and worn-out take on personal relationships, but in fact they redesign the whole field by lifting it from the sole sphere of literature and fiction. Yet despite the strong actuality of the photonovel, which has also moved from the newsstand to the upscale venues of the bookshop and the art gallery, awareness of the medium's history remains astonishingly shallow. At first sight, the reason for the gulf between present and past, between the ubiquity of a once hegemonic popular format and the present niche revivals (the plural matters, for the rediscovery of the photonovel is far from being a homogenous movement), can easily be explained by the thematic and stylistic stand-still of the medium itself. The formal rules and thematic as well as narrative constraints of the traditional photonovel were there from the very beginning, but since they did not prove capable of adapting to new esthetic languages (more auteur-oriented than based on anonymous studio conventions), a new mediascape (with the rapid spread of television) and the societal changes of the 1960s (with May '68 as the bullet in the neck of postwar conservatism), there was simply no way to keep them alive, not even in our memories.

However, this apparently persuasive and all-encompassing explanation does not suffice to help understand the disappearance of the traditional form of the medium from our collective memory (to the point that most modern readers remain utterly surprised when being told that the former leading magazine of the medium, the French *Nous Deux*, continues to be present on newsstands, although no longer close to the counter). Perhaps the fundamental reason for this fading out is quite different and in fact purely material: if the traditional photonovel has been wiped out from the cultural and scholarly agenda, this vanishing results from the lack of real archives, that is, open and retrievable archives that can lend themselves to new forms of reading, curating, study and appropriation. Like so many other forms of popular culture and mass media publication, the photonovel no longer materially exists, having been neglected, thrown away, pulped or burned, and eventually gone. There are certainly private collections, but they are hardly acknowledged in the broader social field. There are also company archives, but they are often well hidden and sometimes even ignored by the current management (private companies do not always see the usefulness of keeping in their basement out-of-commerce material). And of course, photonovels can be found in public archives. Thanks to the legal deposit system, many magazines, though not all of them, are kept in national libraries. It should be stressed however that in general the catalogs describe these items poorly (the record of a magazine issue as one can consult it online is far from always giving its specific content, so that one has already to know what one is looking for if one wants to find something).

Recovering this lost heritage, as the current revival of the photonovel urges us to do, unless we prefer to perpetuate tired clichés on the medium's ideological backwardness and esthetic poverty, depends therefore on our capacity to build a new archive and

its use as a stepping stone to new ways of showing, reading, interpreting and, why not, changing the old format. In this regard, one cannot stress enough the importance of large-scale exhibitions, which have made a vital contribution to a revisionist take on the photonovel: “Roman-Photo” at Mucem-Marseille (2017, curators: Frédérique Deschamps and Marie-Charlotte Calafat; also shown at the Musée de la photographie in Charleroi in 2019), “Sul set. Fotoromanzo, genere e moda nell’archivio di Federico Vendler” at the Palazzo delle Albere in Trento (2017, curator: Katia Malatesta), “Fotoromanzo e poi” at the Photography Biennale of Reggio Emilia (2018, curator: ICS – “Innovazione Cultura Società”), and “Photonovel Culture in Belgium” at the University Library of Leuven (2021, curator: Clarissa Colangelo). The decisive move has been however the start of a broader, yet still fragmented policy to lay the archival foundations of the medium. Certain projects, and to be honest the first ones, have emerged from fan culture – as generally occurs in the field of popular culture where the boundaries between fans and more technically literate readers tend to be blurred, a structural feature that scholars should never forget. A good example of such a grassroots archive is the (closed) Facebook group created and chaired by photonovel historian (and creator) Bruno Takodjerad.<sup>2</sup> Other projects have been supported by public funding, also aiming at implementing the work on the photonovel in the larger efforts to disclose less conventional forms of popular literary and print culture.

The archival research gathered in this volume is the result of such a project. Yet the importance of its findings goes beyond the mere contribution to better knowledge of the medium in general. Funded by the Belgian Federal Science Policy (BELSPO), the “Photo-Lit” program on the Belgian photonovel, a joint project of KBR (National Library) and the universities of Leuven and Liège, had a double objective.<sup>3</sup> First, the digitization of the Belgian photo novel. The photonovel indeed remains a blank space in the cultural history of Belgium: a genre overwhelmingly present yet wholly ignored or actively discarded by researchers. Hence the need to produce an archive that until now only existed in a fragmentary and unorganized way. An endangered form of literature, given the material fragility of its host medium (mostly pulp paper magazines) as well as the extreme difficulty of accessing the material (hardly described in official catalogs or repertories), it is a fascinating case for the conversion of practically inaccessible paper archives to open-access digital archives. Second, the internal and historical study of the genre, with in both cases the ambition to single out the specific contribution of Belgium (francophone as well as Dutch-speaking) to a typically European genre often narrowed down to its French and Italian practices. Contrary to the production in these two countries, strongly related to movie and later television cultures, the Belgian photonovel of the 1950s and 1960s could not rely on such a robust local industry, while it proved systematically intertwined with other, typically Belgian cultural practices such as comics. It also relied on a very different publication strategy, due to the lack of specialized photonovel magazines (the French photonovel weeklies circulated in Belgium as well and prevented the creation of home-

grown equivalents). And as will become very clear in this book, the Belgian production also liked to privilege less typical photonovel genres like the detective story. And, not surprisingly, readers will also discover that Belgians do not always take themselves very seriously.

Thanks to the “Photo-Lit” project it is now possible to explore online the quasi-totality of the Belgian production, at least as far as the traditional photonovel is concerned (the project did not address the artistic and documentary practices that were launched from the 1980s on), some of them in open access, others in limited access only (but all material can be researched on library premises).

This book by Clarissa Colangelo is the companion volume of this landmark online collection. It offers a well-illustrated contextualization of the impressive and visual material (117 stories in open access, 483 stories in limited access). *The Belgian Photonovel, 1954–1985* does not purport to build a new theory of the photonovel or the links between the genre and magazine culture. Elements of these aspects are used as the background of this study, yet not as its horizon. What this book is about, and what it marvelously succeeds in disclosing, is the very materiality of the forgotten Belgian photonovel and the technical aspects of its production, for example as far as printing techniques are concerned. It also gives an excellent overview of the magazines where these photonovels were published and their place in the magazines’ content (since Belgian photonovels never appeared in publications that were exclusively devoted to the genre). In other words, this book is not only an eye-opener, paying an important tribute to a lost world, but also the ideal springboard to further reading and research, which we all hope will become a key concern of all those working on the crossmedial and transmedial world of visual storytelling in print.

Jan Baetens

## Notes

1. See for instance the 1985 *Droit de regards* (English translation with Monicelli Press in 1999 as *Right of Inspection*; current French reprint with Les Impressions Nouvelles in 2011). This 100-page mute photonarrative is accompanied by a forty-page ‘reading’ by Jacques Derrida, which can also be read as a philosophical photonovel manifesto.
2. See <https://www.facebook.com/bruno.takodjerad>. Bruno Takodjerad is also the coauthor, with Marion Minutt and Dominique Faber, of one of the reference books on the (French and Italian) photonovel: *Nous Deux présente: La saga du roman-photo* (Paris: Jean-Claude Gawsewitch, 2012).
3. See Photo-Lit | Photo Novel Culture | Belgium ([photolit-brain.com](http://photolit-brain.com)).

# Introduction

In 2018 I had the chance to talk about photonovels during the international conference *ECHIC 2018 – Equip & Engage. Research and Dissemination Infrastructures for the Humanities*. My presentation was preceded by two speeches, one about digitizing ancient papyri recently found in Egypt, the other on the digitization of works by Shakespeare. During the Q&A that followed the panel, the first question was for me: “Why photonovels?” This was a significant moment for two main reasons. On the one hand, it showed a still existing bias towards popular culture. Nobody questioned whether digitizing ancient papyri or Shakespeare’s texts was a good idea; it was obvious that the answer was “yes”. The long tradition of academic studies on these matters, coupled with their immediate association with highbrow culture, made the study and attention dedicated to them clearly worth the effort. The same could not be said for photonovels. A popular genre, sentimental even, published in cheap magazines, clearly raised a few eyebrows. On the other hand, the question highlighted that photonovels were completely unknown to most of the audience. They are one of the most successful editorial phenomena of the postwar period, with more than thirty years of undiscussed popularity and millions of readers, and yet little to no research has been done on them. If anything, the question truly showed the urgency of research: photonovels have been forgotten despite their earlier popularity, and the gap needs to be filled in order to bring attention back to an essential phenomenon that characterized the postwar period and influenced a whole generation.

This research finds its place within the frame of the project “Photo-Lit – The Belgian photonovel: local reuse of a European cultural practice”. The four-year project was funded by the Belspo BRAIN-be framework and came to an end in April 2021.<sup>1</sup> In a joint effort, research was brought forward by three partners: KU Leuven (Jan Baetens, Fred Truyen and myself), Université de Liège (Michel Delville, Luciano Curreri and Luca di Gregorio) and the Royal Library of Belgium, abbreviated as KBR (head of digitization Frédéric Lemmers and digitization technician Sébastien Hermans). The aim of the project was twofold. On the one hand, it aimed to disclose the Belgian contribution to the photonovel, which had been completely overlooked by the existing scholarship and had never been studied, cataloged or properly stored, dispersed as it was across the various floors of the storage rooms

of the KBR, other archives and private collections. On the other hand, the project aimed to catalog, describe and digitize this corpus, facing all the technical questions this posed, such as how best to digitize it, the necessity of specific metadata and copyright issues. The outcome of this pioneering endeavor is now available online on the “Belgica” website of the KBR,<sup>2</sup> which gives access to no less than 117 orphan works and 483 photonovels in limited access, all of them also available on demand on the premises of the Library.

In addition to this global aim, the Photo-Lit project also delivered a certain number of more general analyses of the photonovel genre from a more literary and cultural point of view, the results of which have been published in other various venues, books and articles.<sup>3</sup>

It is important to stress from the very beginning that the objective of the study presented in this book was not the photonovel as a form of serialized visual storytelling in print. Its ambitions are not narratological or semiotic. Nor do they claim to explore the impact of serial composition and magazine culture on the specific ways of organizing and editing the stories of these popular narratives, many of them melodramas (although the Belgian corpus reveals more than one opening to other genres). Instead, the focus has been put on the Belgian production and publication of photonovels, analyzed in a material and cultural-historical perspective. Issues of narrative theory and magazine studies are of course not discarded, but only referred to in order to support the properly archival and historical objectives of this work. The primary aim, modest as it may appear in comparison to the broad questions raised by the cultural and literary analysis of some other studies,<sup>4</sup> has been to investigate the Belgian photonovel, tracing and disclosing its history, its birth, evolution and disappearance, taking into consideration its European – specifically Italian and French – models. By “Belgian photonovel”, I mean in this study all types of photonovels “made in Belgium”, either produced in Belgium, published in Belgium or made by a Belgian for the Belgian market. The analysis explores the importance of the photonovel in the context of postwar reconstruction and economic growth, as part of a new culture eager to express certain values, specifically the ones typical of the consumer society that was taking shape. I do think that the photonovel has been a great help in the larger process of normalization in this new society. Photonovels were in fact not only a sentimental product to grant readers a moment of light and pleasant reading, but worked as mirrors of society, exerting a great influence on their readers and being influenced in turn.

Next to the cultural-historical analysis, the heart of this work is the study of the photonovel in its material aspects as a printed object. A closer look at the photonovel in Belgium revealed a large number of popular magazines that published and produced them, each with their own specific characters; it also revealed their importance within the magazines that published them, where the photonovel could be more or less integrated into the pages and occupy a space of honor inside the weeklies, or whose presence was justified simply by a market logic, which saw the photonovel as a product that sold well. To create photo-

novels, craftsmanship was required alongside the intelligent use of photographic technologies and techniques. The recurring authors, photographers and actors are here discussed in order to bring light to their creative efforts. The printing process of the photonovel (and the weeklies) is also analyzed in detail, with the aim of dealing with the impact of printing on the quality of the images and creating a better understanding of the medium in which photonovels were experienced and that gave them their final, grainy look.

As a topic never explored before, the main question that lies at the basis of this research is thus very general: “What is the Belgian photonovel?” And also: “Does this production have cultural, economic, and esthetic properties that are different from its foreign models?” To research these questions, I had to elaborate a specific methodology, which I will explain below but which started with splitting up my general questions into a series of more explicit but still somewhat vague enquiries, such as: When did the publication of photonovels in Belgium begin? When did it end? What were the magazines that published photonovels in Belgium? What was the relevance of the photonovel? Who worked on the production of photonovels? Were they original or imported works? Were there specific traits distinguishing the Belgian photonovel from its European siblings? How were photonovels made? What was the effect of printing on the final look of the photonovel? Yet these perhaps still quite ingenuous questions have been very useful when determining my methodology.

To tackle these questions, the work has been divided into five chapters. In the brief presentation that follows, I will include some references to the most relevant scholarly publications on the topic. Even if some of this material, generally focusing on non-Belgian productions and situations, will only serve as a general background to this study, I think it makes sense to already hint at what might be called ‘further reading’. Chapter 1 situates the photonovel by providing, first of all, a definition of what is considered a photonovel within this work. I will work with a definition of the photonovel as a visual narrative consisting of three intertwined elements: 1) a unique relation between images and text, 2) the sentimental nature of the stories and 3) a specific publishing format, that of the women’s weekly. While this does not attempt to be the definite and exhaustive definition of a photonovel, it nonetheless serves to get all readers acquainted with the topic. It will also make explicit the boundaries of this research, which considers photonovels falling under the given definition, but does not analyze the later variations thereof. The analysis also highlights the two main models of the photonovel, namely the film-novel and the ‘drawn-novel’,<sup>5</sup> an even lesser-known genre, which acted as inspiration and influence.

The chapter then moves on to describing the Italian origins of the photonovel, its French expansion and its arrival in Belgium. The birth of the photonovel – in Italy in 1947 – is briefly discussed together with its expansion to France, before moving on to explore its appearance in Belgium. The context plays a major role in defining the success of the photonovel, but also the many criticisms it received from the educated elites. As the

photonovel is traditionally a product for women and features many female characters, I briefly examine how the image of the woman in the photonovel differed from the women of the time and how the photonovel can be seen as an hybrid item in light of emancipation: on the one hand, conservative and traditional; on the other hand, offering an image of strong women fighting for their desires.

A quick sketch of the historical context of the time is given in order to better understand how the photonovel was a product of its time. The specific characters of the postwar period and of the changing society in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s had a direct influence on the photonovel and its success. This chapter analyzes this influence, together with the paradox afflicting mass-produced sentimental press at large: despite its success (or maybe because of it), it has been criticized, despised and scorned by more sophisticated, high-literary readers and various institutions concerned with the quality of popular reading.<sup>6</sup>

It should be stressed however that even in the beginning of the photonovel there were more positive voices, most importantly that of the feminist Evelyne Sullerot, whose positive take on the genre as a laboratory of new gender representations and democratization of literary heritage was soon to be followed by similar pleas by Serge Saint-Michel and Jean-Claude Chirollet.<sup>7</sup> When the photonovel migrated from the field of popular magazines to the world of book publishing and art photography, a tendency that slowly emerged in the second half of the 1970s but which remains outside the scope of my study, a large number of publications stressed the creative and highly innovative achievements of the photonovel, that is of the ‘new’ photonovel: John Berger and Jean Mohr’s *Another Way of Telling*,<sup>8</sup> Jean Baudrillard’s essay on Sophie Calle’s *Suite vénitienne*,<sup>9</sup> Alexandra Koeniguer’s PhD on the work by Plissart-Peeters,<sup>10</sup> and the book by Silvana Turzio on the several generations of Italian photonovels.<sup>11</sup> The recent vogue of photonovel exhibitions<sup>12</sup> has generally attempted, often quite successfully, to bridge to gap between ‘low’ and ‘high’, sometimes even tradition and experiment, as shown by their well-documented catalogues. Publications such as *Le roman-photo* (Baetens and Mélois),<sup>13</sup> a documentary photonovel on the history and poetics of the photonovel, or *Comme un roman-photo* (Lia Rochàs-Paris),<sup>14</sup> are two other examples of this ‘inclusive’ policy, which dominates the new trend in contemporary photonovel book production in France – but this is a different story.

The chapter concludes with a reflection on the position of the photonovel between tradition and emancipation, between the persistence of conventional role and gender models and the emergence of new forms of agency for female readers. The photonovel is of course not the only cultural form that participated in these larger social, ideological and esthetic changes, but given its ubiquity in the postwar decades, it is not unreasonable to argue that the narrow focus on one specific cultural form is able to offer new insights into society’s transformations. It would be dangerous to start overgeneralizing the results of this reading of the photonovel, but it would be equally treacherous to neglect or underestimate the impact of this immensely popular cultural form.

The following chapters focus more specifically on the exploration of the paper nature of photonovels, and do so by following the logic of a macro to micro approach. Chapter 2 analyzes the Belgian editorial context, sketching the situation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and more specifically after World War II, in order to ground the photonovel, a print phenomenon, in its production context (for a wider approach to the photonovel in its relationship with the world of cinema and television, see the historical overviews of Faber, Minuit and Takodjerad,<sup>15</sup> focusing on France, in addition of course to the foundational studies of Anna Bravo, Silvana Turzio and Patrizia Bonifazio<sup>16</sup> on Italy; for the relationships between photonovel and film photonovel, see Pierre Pinchon,<sup>17</sup> Jan Baetens,<sup>18</sup> and Emiliano Morreale;<sup>19</sup> most of these studies refer to the short documentary by Michelangelo Antonioni, *L'amorosa menzogna* (Antonioni 1949) as the starting point of a broader reflection on the film/photonovel continuum). In this book, particular attention is given to the language divide that characterized Belgian publishing, which is reflected in the production and publication of photonovels as well. This language divide between Dutch-speaking and francophone magazines allowed for a parallel evolution, strikingly much more blurred in the magazine world (the properly 'verbal' dimension of the photonovel remains an understudied aspect of the genre).<sup>20</sup>

Chapter 3 narrows the analysis down to the popular weeklies – not only women's weeklies but also family and youth weeklies – that published photonovels. There were indeed recurring publishing companies that either printed various of these magazines or bought them at a later time, making the field somewhat smaller and in the hands of only a few publishing companies. The chapter chiefly presents and discusses the women's weeklies, which witnessed a rise in numbers after the war.<sup>21</sup> The importance of these magazines cannot be underestimated. They were shaped to be perceived as trusted advisors and as such entered the domestic sphere of women providing tips and suggestions, able to influence and steer preferences. Belgian photonovels were printed in such magazines and the chapter moves on to a detailed description of each: *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui / Lectuur voor Allen*, *Mon Copain*, *Chez Nous / Ons Volk*, *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw*, *Bonnes Soirées / Mimosa*, *Piccolo* and *Tiptop*, *Vrouw en Huis*, *Panorama*, *Rosita*, *Ons Land met Iris*, *Madame*, and *Joepie*. These magazines are discussed in detail, as they were the containers of the photonovels and, as such, had a direct influence on them. The publications are analyzed one by one, in chronological order of publication of photonovels. For each, a number of details are recorded, such as the beginning and end of the publication, the publishing house and the general aim, audience and content of the magazine. The length of time for the photonovels that were published in the magazines is also described, highlighting special elements, peculiarities and possible deviations from the norm. The photonovels published in these magazines reached their highest numbers during the 1960s, although they had already appeared in 1954 and kept on being published in the 1970s and even as late as the 1980s. The stories were generally sentimental, but in some cases it was possible



to distinguish a certain attempt to explore a more suspenseful sphere typical of the detective genre. The list of magazines is enriched by a few other magazines that either published photonovels differently (*Roman Film complet*, *Sandra / Katia*, *Sérenade*) or published photonovels of a slightly different kind (*HUMO*, *Sportif '68 / Sport '68*).

How a photonovel was produced and printed in the magazine is discussed in Chapter 4. Here attention is given to the technical elements that made the production and printing of photonovels possible. The important testimony of photonovel director Hubert Serra, *Voyage au Cœur du roman-photo*,<sup>22</sup> an invaluable document as far as the actual shooting and 'making of' protocols are concerned, does not give many details on the actual printing questions, which depended on the commercial decisions of the magazines he worked for. A key contribution in this regard is the work by Raffaele De Berti<sup>23</sup> on the role of rotogravure in the evolution of mass media magazines. The description of the production process highlights the often overlooked craftsmanship that lay at the basis of photonovels and shows both the technical and the paper nature of the material side of these publications. Starting from a literary source or some genre cliché turned into a script often with an illustrated storyboard, photonovels were made by a team of people under the supervision of an author who worked as the director of the production and, sometimes, in tandem with the magazines that produced the photonovels. With a Belgian focus, recurring authors, photographers and actors are here discussed in light of their creative work in the making of a photonovel. In addition to analyzing the roles of the author, photographer and actors, the discussion concentrates on the names that were recorded in the credits of the Belgian photonovels, creating an overview of the most often recurring ones and describing more in detail who they were. This will allow us to notice that the world of photonovels is tightly connected with other domains such as journalism, comics and film.

The chapter then dives into the technicalities of printing, which determined the final aspect of the photonovel. The rotogravure process is discussed in detail in order to highlight its complexity and its impact on the rendering of photographs and texts, and therefore on the final look of the photonovel. It will appear that the limitations of press printing, with contrasted and grainy images, match the sentimental genre and the small format of the photographs as laid out on the page, contributing to creating the intimate sphere so typical of photonovels.

Finally, Chapter 5 touches more closely upon the photonovel as an item inside the magazine pages. In addition to analyzing the size, frequency of publication, number of pages and place of the photonovels in the Belgian weeklies, it is also investigated how the photonovel was integrated into the magazine, which demonstrated a greater or lesser involvement of the editors in the photonovel, and how it interacted with other elements of the magazine, specifically with advertisements. In some cases photonovels were treated as an indispensable part of the magazine that helped shape its identity as a whole; in other cases it is possible to discern only rather mild interest in the photonovel content

from the editorial staff, which led to considerations on the presence of the photonovel inside the magazine as a strategic item (it was extremely popular, so it could help sales) or as a requested item (readers expected to find photonovels in the magazine, so the editors indulged them). The analysis also contains a closer look at the relationship between the photonovel and the other contents of the magazine. Particularly exemplary is the exchange with advertisements. Photonovels shared with advertisements not only similarities in layout, but also in esthetics and in content, blurring the line between fictional and non-fictional elements of the magazine and creating a unique interchange where one element reinforced the other. Aspects concerning imported versus original works and distribution agencies are equally discussed here, in order to try and achieve the aim of providing a complete view of the photonovel as a printed object in the interconnected print culture of the time.

Before moving on to some specific methodological issues of this study, it may be useful however to recall a general tendency of previous and ongoing scholarship in the field, particular details of which will return in this study. During the so-called golden age of the photonovel, 1947–1970, most debates on the genre had a strong axiological character: the large majority severely attacked it, for esthetic and ideological reasons (photonovels were stupid as well as dangerous). In this period, the few more positive comments came from critics and scholars who believed that a brighter future was *possible* nevertheless.<sup>24</sup> In later years, the negative stance toward the genre would not disappear, but the more confident comments and reviews would instead lose this militant tone<sup>25</sup> and prefer a formal and historical examination of the photonovel. Rather than asking whether the photonovel is harmful (to the reader's taste formation and mental health), these studies focused on what a photonovel is (in itself as well as in comparison with other, related genres and practices). However, even this no longer 'committed' approach to the photonovel is also a way of upgrading the genre. And logically, this book is part of that larger movement.

## Methodology

This work is the result of research conducted following varying approaches. To describe and analyze the Belgian photonovel a mixed methodology was used as it made it possible to best match the intermedia nature of the photonovel.

The starting point was a bibliographical research of the sources available on the topic. These can be divided into three groups. First of all, the sources tackling the subject of photonovels, mainly Italian and French, but also Spanish and South American. Secondly, the sources that focused on Belgium, discussing women's weeklies, history, publishing and so on. The third group consists of what we could see as the secondary literature, not directly dealing with photonovels or with Belgium, but necessary to ground and enrich

the research. The study of the sources belonging to the first and second groups served to create a deep understanding of the topic and its Belgian context, but also confirmed the lack of sources specifically dedicated to the Belgian photonovel. Academic sources on Belgian women's weeklies are also not abundant and the existing literature often only touches upon the subject briefly, before moving on to discussing more established forms of writing (books, newspapers, etc.). This lack speaks volumes about a general contempt for the sentimental press, which has remained under-researched, at least in its magazine format, and clarified once again the pressing need for research such as the present one.

Something that might raise questions is that some of the sources used are old. While in other contexts these sources might be considered dated, when studying photonovels they are of essential importance. Sources on photonovels written when photonovels were popular give an account of the phenomenon as it happened. Although sometimes tainted by a negative opinion of photonovels, they nonetheless show to a reader of today the way in which photonovels were treated and handled at the time and provide a window into the past. These sources become themselves study material in order to define the context of photonovels, the perception of these stories, and their audiences.

The bibliographical study also revealed that some types of apparently 'nonscientific' information – that is, not official, historical, economic or political – necessary for researching the context of such a popular product were not easily available. For this reason it was necessary, at times, to leave the academic field and look at online sources and the so-called 'rogue archives'<sup>26</sup> as well as the larger field of 'grey literature':<sup>27</sup> rogue archives maybe less reliable, but they are often a trove of personal recordings, where information is recorded in a disorderly fashion and purely out of interest and passion, while grey literature (brochures, promotional flyers, trade publications, etc.) is typically the material one does not find in bibliographies or libraries, but that is often crucial for a better understanding of the topic under scrutiny. This is an approach typical of heritage studies: to record anecdotes as the starting point of archives, to let the past speak. The material thus gathered provides a more personal and colorful account of popular and general aspects that are hardly considered by academic research, but that a study like this is not allowed to disregard.

In addition to bibliographical research, the corpus of Belgian photonovels had to be rediscovered. This was done at the premises of the KBR, which holds almost every publication ever printed in Belgium, especially from after the introduction of the legal deposit in 1966. At the beginning of the project there was a starting idea of the magazines in which some photonovels might have been printed. However, it quickly became clear, by scanning the stacks of the storage rooms of the Royal Library and leafing through the magazines that matched the years under scrutiny, that much more was to be found. The size of the corpus quickly doubled and we now have a clear understanding of it, although the possibility exists that further research will identify more magazines with photonovels to be added. It should be noted that in this work the magazines *Avondlectuur* and *Bonjour*

*Bonheur* are not discussed because they were identified at a later stage of the research. The photonovels published by these magazines have yet to be described and catalogued – this gap is due to the Covid crisis, which hindered access to the material. While a focus on the narrative elements of the photonovels in the corpus was not the aim of this work, a close reading was nonetheless essential to analyze the presence of the photonovels within the various magazines, their integration, the space they occupied and the relationship with the rest of the content of the magazine. It was also necessary to compile a list of names: authors, scenarists, photographers, assistants, actors, agencies were all recorded in order to map the people who contributed to the making of photonovels published in Belgium, in addition to gathering important information about the origin of the photonovels, the more or less professional way of working, the ties among photonovel creators, magazine editors, comics artists, journalists, film directors and screenwriters, and so on.

Because of the wealth of material, a conscious decision was made to focus exclusively on the so-called ‘traditional’ photonovels, leaving out of this analysis the photonovels made in Belgium that did not strictly belong to the popular weeklies of the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. It should be pointed out that the photonovels of this period did not refer to themselves as ‘traditional’ and, in the early years, often did not use the term photonovel either. The already mentioned Antonioni documentary, which does not make any distinction between the photonovel *stricto sensu* and the slightly older ‘drawn-novel’ (see below, Chapter 1) that preceded it, is symptomatic of this terminological confusion, which is also reflected in the generic subtitle of the first magazine, *Il Mio Sogno*, that published photonovels: “settimanale di romanzi d’amore a fotogrammi” (“love stories weekly with photograms”).<sup>28</sup> As the photonovel was born, it took a few years before a fixed name was established to refer to this new kind of stories. In the corpus we see this search reflected in the many photonovels referred to as drawn-novels, film-novels, filmed-novels and drawn-stories. Despite the terminological confusion, the characters of these stories clearly identify them as what we today can call ‘traditional’ photonovels, a definition of which is given in Chapter 1. In the Belgian context, the situation is no less complex than in other countries, also given the appearance of a certain number of subtypes that exceed the narrow limits of the traditional photonovel melodrama.

Although interesting and fascinating material, other material falls outside the scope of this study, which focuses on the mass media magazine publications of the photonovel’s golden age. One may think here of the artistic photonovels of Marie-Françoise Plissart in collaboration with Benoît Peeters;<sup>29</sup> the erotic photonovels such as the ones published in the adult magazine *Speciaal Contact / Empire Sensuel* (kept locked away in a secluded room at the KBR; the study of pornographic photonovels is an emergent field);<sup>30</sup> the photonovels with an educational or touristic aim, such as the one on the theft of the “Mystic Lamb”, a city marketing project of the city of Ghent; recent photonovels such as the “Rue Antoine Dansaertstraat”, the “Sex & the City” of Brussels,<sup>31</sup> or the photonovel starring Sam & Kelly;

the reality photonovels published in the magazine *Deng* in the early 2000s, one including a photonovel starring the then Prince and Princess Filip and Mathilde (an early yet not always very serious forerunner of the current trend of docu-photonovels, as illustrated in France by the work of Vincent Jousseau<sup>32</sup> or Benoît Vidal at FLBLE publishers,<sup>33</sup> and, more generally, the graphic journalism promoted by a monthly such as *XXI*), and one should add to this category the ‘didactic’ photonovels published by various types of groups and institutions; the parodic photonovels by Urbanus and Kamagurka; photonovels for the youth, such as “The Adventures of Victor Credo”; and any other photonovel that deviates from the traditional, sentimental photonovels of the women’s weeklies of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and that one can see as a watered-down version of the biting satiric (but visually extremely traditional) photonovels of French magazines such as *Hara-Kiri*.<sup>34</sup>

This research also made use of interviews. While many people who either made photonovels, published them or starred in them have, unfortunately, passed away, some still remain to recount their reading memoirs and experiences. This is the case, for example, for Richard Olivier, a Belgian author of photonovels who passed away in 2021, Michel Courant, an actor and assistant of photonovel author Hubert Serra, Jean-Pol, who took care of the lettering of many photonovels, José Schoovaerts, one of the directors of the distributing agency Real Press who worked with photonovel author Jacques Van Melkebeke, and Marie-Christine Cabie, a young actress in photonovels in the 1960s. Interviews with them provided a valuable insight into an under-studied topic, while also allowing their voices, memories and experiences to be recorded. Besides these interviews, contact with people was essential to fill in the gaps left by the lack of literature and gather insight into various aspects, such as the printing processes or the curatorial choices behind the recent exhibitions on Italian and French photonovels.

Before moving on to Chapter 1, a few practical remarks need to be made. First of all, and as already said, this research refers to the stories known as *fotoromanzo* in Italian, *roman-photo* in French, *fotoroman* in Dutch and *fotonovela* in Spanish and Portuguese (in English, the terminological fog is thick: photonovel, photo story, but also, in the US, ‘fumetti’, the Italian word for comics!). As the topic does not have an anglophone tradition and has rarely been studied in English, there is no established term to discuss it, sometimes being referred to as ‘photo-novel’, ‘photo novel’, ‘photo story’ or ‘photoromance’. The decision to stick to ‘photonovel’ derives from its closest similarity to the Italian term, which was the established name of photonovels in their country of origin. Secondly, direct quotes from sources have been translated into English, unless, of course, the source is in English or has a published English translation. The reason for this is the variety of the sources used – in Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese and English – which, if left in their original form, would have created a multilingual patchwork that could jeopardize the understanding of the text. Original texts are nevertheless always to be found in their entirety in the endnotes. Lastly, when discussing photonovels written in French, the term ‘francophone’

has been preferred to ‘French-speaking’; similarly, for photonovels written in Dutch, the term ‘netherlandophone’ has been preferred to ‘Dutch-speaking’, although it is, admittedly, much less common.

## Notes

1. See more detailed info on the BELSPO website: ‘PHOTO-LIT. The Belgian photo-novel: the local reuse of a European cultural practice’ ([https://www.belspo.be/belspo/brain-be/projects/PHOTO-LIT\\_en.pdf](https://www.belspo.be/belspo/brain-be/projects/PHOTO-LIT_en.pdf)), and the project website: Photo-Lit | Photo Novel Culture | Belgium ([photolit-brain.com](http://photolit-brain.com)).
2. See Belgica – photonovels | KBR (<https://belgica.kbr.be/BELGICA/photonovels.aspx>).
3. Jan Baetens, *Pour le roman-photo* (Brussels: Les Impressions Nouvelles, 2017); Luciano Curreri, Michel Delville, and Giuseppe Palumbo, *Tutto quello che non avreste mai voluto leggere – o rileggere – sul fotoromanzo. Una passeggiata* (Bologna: Comma 22, 2021); Clarissa Colangelo and Luca Di Gregorio, “Un roman-photo déviant ? Glissements culturels et sociologiques d’un genre sentimental dans la presse magazine belge et française (1967–1972),” *Communication et langages* 212 (2022): 155–175.
4. For the narrative and semiotic analysis, see Baetens, *Pour le roman-photo*; for the semiotic and thematic analysis, see Evelyne Sullerot, *La Presse Féminine* (Paris: Colin, [1963] 1966), for a combination of narrative and political analysis, see Ana Bravo, *Il fotoromanzo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003). More detailed bibliographical information in the rest of this introduction.
5. Jan Baetens, “‘The Roman Dessiné’: A Little-Known Genre,” *Bande Dessinée Thinking Outside the Boxes*, ed. Laurence Grove, *Yale French Studies* 131/132 (2017): 65–83.
6. For an overview of the first critical reception, see Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*; Sylvette Giet, *Nous Deux 1947–1997. Apprendre la langue du cœur* (Leuven/Paris: Peeters/Vrin, 1998); and Angeluccia Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela e indústria cultural* (Petropolis: Vozes, 1974) for the situation in respectively Italy, France and Latin America?
7. Evelyne Sullerot, “Photoromans et œuvres littéraires,” *Communications* 2 (1963): 77–85; Serge Saint-Michel, *Le Roman-photo* (Paris: Larousse, 1979); Jean-Claude Chirollet, *Esthétique du Photoroman* (Paris: Edilig, 1983).
8. London: Bloomsbury, [1981] 2017.
9. Jean Baudrillard, “Please Follow Me,” in Sophie Calle, *Suite vénitienne* (Paris: Editions de l’Etoile, 1983).
10. *Autour du roman-photo: de la littérature dans la photographie. Les objets de Marie-Françoise Plissart et Benoît Peeters* (Université Jean Monnier, sous la direction de Danièle Méaux, 2017).

11. *Il fotoromanzo. Metamorfosi delle storie lacrimevoli* (Milan: Meltemi, 2019).
12. “Photo-littérature”, Fondation Jan Michalski, Montricher, 14 Oct.-30 Dec. 2016, “Roman-photo”, Mucem-Marseille (Mucem-Marseille 13 Dec. 2017-29 April 2018), “Sul Set. Fotoromanzi, genere e moda nell’archivio di Federico Vender”, Trento, 8 Sept. – 10 Dec. 2017, “Fotoromanzo e poi”, Reggio Emilia, 20 Apr. – 19 July 2018, “Roman-photo”, Musée de la photographie Charleroi 2019 (2 May-29 Sept. 2019), “Photo-Lit”, University Library Leuven, 18 March-9 May 2021.
13. Brussels: Le Lombard, 2018.
14. Paris: éd. Parties Prises, 2019.
15. Dominique Faber, Marion Minuit, and Bruno Takodjerad, *Nous Deux présente la saga du roman-photo* (Paris: Jean-Claude Gawsewitch Éditeur, 2012).
16. *The Photoromance. A Feminist Reading of Popular Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2020).
17. *Contrebandes Godard 1960–1968* (Montreuil: éd. Matière, 2018).
18. *The Film Photonovel. A Cultural History of Forgotten Adaptations* (Austin: Texas University Press, 2019).
19. *Lo schermo di carta* (Turin: Museo Nazionale del Cinema & Il Castoro, 2007).
20. See however the interesting study by Giuseppe Sergio, *Liala, dal romanzo al fotoromanzo. Le scelte linguistiche, lo stile, I temi* (Milan: Mimesis, 2012).
21. On the role and place of the photonovel in the publishing industry, see Sullereto, *La Presse féminine*; Bravo, *Il fotoromanzo*; and Bernardes Habert, *La fotonovela*. For obvious reasons, none of them focuses on the Belgian situation.
22. Paris: Les Indes savantes, 2017.
23. See among various other publications by the same author, *Forme e modelli del rotocalco italiano tra fascismo e guerra*, ed. Raffaele De Berti and Irene Piazzoni (Milan: Cisalpino, 2009).
24. In addition to the already mentioned work by Sullerot, it is important to add the name of Gérard Blanchard. In an often-quoted article whose title already sounds like a manifesto, “Du roman-photo au photo-roman” (*Communication et langages* 10 (1971): 95–109), he gives a first outline of an esthetically as well as ideologically valuable photonovel. A key historic reference in this regard is the use of the term ‘photo-roman’ by Chris Marker to put a genre label on his experimental movie *La Jetée* (1962), which explores the boundaries between the fixed and the moving image. It is the prestige of Marker that in the 1960s encouraged more than one critic to dream of another type of photonovel.
25. An important exception is Grégory Jarry’s manifesto, *Debout le roman-photo* (Poitiers: Éditions FLBLB, 2015).
26. Abigail De Kosnik, *Rogue Archives. Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2016).

27. Joachim Schöpfel and Dominic Farace, “Grey Literature,” in *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences*, ed. M.J. Bates and M.N. Maack, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Boca Raton, Fla.: CRC Press, 2010), 2029–2039.
28. For some details on these terminological muddles, see Baetens, *The Film Photonovel*.
29. Baetens, *Pour le roman-photo*; Koeniguer, *Autour du roman-photo*.
30. A research project is being prepared by the group “fotoromanzo italiano”: Fotoromanzoitaliano – Home (<https://www.fotoromanzoitaliano.it/>).
31. For a good French equivalent, see Lia Rochas-Pàris, *Vasistas* (Paris: Parties Prises, 2010).
32. See for instance *Les Racines de la colère* (Paris: Les Arènes, 2019) and *Les Femmes du lien* (Paris: Les Arènes, 2022).
33. See for instance *Gaston en Normandie* (Poitiers: FLBLE, 2022).
34. For an anthology of this work, see *Les romans photos du professeur Choron: Un florilège des romans-photo écrits par Wolinski pour Hara Kiri* (Grenoble: Glénat, 2009).





# Chapter 1

## A brief history of the photonovel

**W**hat is a photonovel? When was it born? Where does it come from? What paved the road for its success? These are the questions informing the first and second sections of this chapter, which focus on the origin of the photonovel and explore its roots, models and expansion. In an historical overview, the photonovel is here presented in its European – specifically Italian and French – context, in order to explain and ground the topic, before moving on to a specific analysis of the Belgian photonovel and cultural-historical (editorial) context in the following chapters. This is done in the belief that the connections between Italian and French photonovels on the one hand, and Belgian photonovels on the other, are essential for an informed study and a general understanding of the Belgian production and publication of photonovels.

The third section looks more closely at the paradox that here has been named “fame versus shame”: the incredible popularity of the photonovel on the one hand, and the contemptuous opinions of highbrow readers on the other, which determined for many years a lack of interest in and study of a topic that had such a large influence on its readers.

The last section touches upon the role of the woman as portrayed by the photonovel, and attempts to analyze its (lack of) emancipatory traits in light of a changing society. Traditional gender roles and stronger, more independent photonovel characters are discussed also with an eye to the magazines that published photonovels, in order to gain a better insight into the presence or absence of feminist stances within the scorned sentimental press of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 A working definition

Many of the existing studies on the photonovel show a tendency to start from its origins and models, taking for granted that readers will already be acquainted with what a photonovel is.<sup>2</sup> This might indeed be true for readers in Italy and France, countries where the photonovel has had such a long history and a large success that there is an immediate understanding of what photonovels look like – in some cases, photonovels are still published today. However, the present work adopts a different approach and does not begin the study of photonovels *in medias res* on the assumption that the term ‘photonovel’ already has a meaning in the reader’s mind. There are various reasons to proceed in this way. First of all, in Belgium photonovels disappeared gradually in the 1970s, with only a few examples still existing in the 1980s. The result is that today the photonovel is very little known, if not completely unknown to modern (and younger) readers. The second reason is that the photonovel held for many years a negative reputation, which might lead to negative associations today. If one ever knew about photonovels in these terms, the risk is of a bias that might influence the general understanding of the photonovel. The third reason has to do with the academic context in which this work is situated, a milieu that, historically, has generally ignored the existence of photonovels. Although there have surfaced studies on the photonovel in recent years, this is not (yet) a topic with a standing tradition of studies, making it somewhat of a black sheep in academia (it was a pleasure to list quite a number of publications in the introduction, but I am well aware of the fact that this body of work is still very marginal in the general research on visual narrative in print). Lastly, this work is written in English and aspires at targeting a broader audience who, on the one hand, come from countries that might not have participated in the tradition of photonovels and, on the other hand, might not have had the chance yet to read about this topic because of the paucity of anglophone sources discussing it.

So, what is a photonovel? The answer given here does not seek to be the ultimate definition of what a photonovel is, which may vary depending on a number of elements (the way one approaches the topic and the material studied, for example), but seeks to highlight what is considered a photonovel within this study. As a visual medium, an object intended to be looked at, our search for a definition begins with the images below. We can define a photonovel as a form of visual narrative, where the story is brought forward by a combination of photographs, captions and speech balloons. The photographs are laid out on the page in tiers, typically three tiers with two or three images each, or four tiers with three images each. This grid can be more or less flexible according to the needs of each photonovel: it can be simple, consisting of a juxtaposition of images of the same size as portrayed in Figure 1, or present variations in the form of the images (with photographs in rectangular, square, round, parallelogram or trapezoid frames) and size (with photographs the height of the tier, but broader or thinner, or enlarged to occupy more space on the page) as seen in Figure 2. One photonovel would usually present an alternation of



**Figure 1:** Two pages of the photonovel “La lande sans étoiles” published in *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui* on December 5<sup>th</sup> 1963. Note the simple and repetitive layout, characterized by three tiers with two photographs each, all of the same form and size (© Roularta).

these characters, using the simple grid as a base for the story and adding more dynamic elements to break the severity of the layout and emphasize certain details of the story.

Photonovels’ prime can be narrowed down to the late 1940s, the 1950s and 1960s, and well into the 1970s. They were published in popular weeklies, either in magazines entirely dedicated to these stories, or in women’s weeklies among other content such as articles, sewing patterns and recipes (Figure 3). They could be published as complete stories, but more often they were serialized (excellent surveys of the relationships between the overlapping fields of media a culture and serialization can be found in Letourneux,<sup>3</sup> Kelleter,<sup>4</sup> and the various publications of the German research unit on Journalliteratur).<sup>5</sup> In the latter case, they would be broken up into episodes to appear in each issue of the weekly, typically occupying two to five pages of the magazine. Each episode would begin by reiterating the title and often offering a summary of the previous happenings, devoting to it the space of one image or the whole of the top tier of the page.

The stories of photonovels were sentimental. They revolved around love and took inspiration from the *feuilleton* and the melodrama typical of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup>



Figure 2: Note how the form and size of the images vary, giving a sense of dynamicity to the page. "Rendez-vous te Amboise" *Lectuur voor Allen*, September 25<sup>th</sup> 1954.



**Figure 3:** Examples of women's weeklies that published photonovels in Belgium.

As Bravo points out, the melodrama lent to the photonovel its main characters of a narrative that plays within the dichotomy good–bad, where misunderstandings and secrets are typical and only find resolution after many pages, and that ends with a happy return to normalcy.<sup>7</sup> In addition to popular and current themes, photonovels quickly explored other models and began featuring adaptations of literary works starting from the 1950s, such as *Madame Bovary* and *Wuthering Heights*, and of popular sentimental literature, pieces of theater and television shows.

The three main elements of a photonovel are thus given: a visual narrative that is 1) built on a unique integration of text and images, that is 2) published within the pages of popular (women's) weeklies, generally in installment format – a “pure product of popular feminine press” as Sullerot writes<sup>8</sup> – and that is 3) characterized by sentimental stories that develop following a recognizable pattern. The weaving of these three aspects together is essential because, on the one hand, it defines the photonovel and its success, while, on the other hand, it also makes its boundaries clear. The photonovel in fact, successfully born of these three elements, never entirely managed to exist outside of these boundaries in a convincing fashion (at least, not with the same staggering popularity). Hubert Serra, one of the most prolific authors of photonovels, tried to argue that the photonovel is a “container”, in theory apt to be used as a medium to tell any kind of story.<sup>9</sup> However, after its successful launch with sentimental stories, the photonovel has never been able to move away from romance to explore other sorts of contents, and, as Bravo points out, it is therefore “more a genre than a medium”.<sup>10</sup> It has also not succeeded in escaping the magazine format to be published, for example, as a book or a collection.

*Say that we deprive it of its sentimental framework, we upset its text-image relationship or we extract it from its magazine, and the photonovel changes its nature (comic strip, photo reportage), interests less [...] or tends to disappear (we hardly ever collect it in books).<sup>11</sup>*

If the success of the photonovel appears to be linked to these three elements and their inflexible, almost monolithic relationship, it however needs to be pointed out that within this structure much variation could still exist. The incriminating sameness the photonovel has been blamed for by its many detractors underlies a superficial reading of these stories that solely focused on the (admittedly often unoriginal) sentimental narratives and failed to appreciate the novelty of this product, its stylistic differences, its technical innovations, and its cultural impact.

## 1.2 Origins, evolution and decline

That the photonovel could become so popular overnight is due not only to the fact that it appeared at just the right moment, as will be discussed below, but also to the fact that it was rooted in a long, visual tradition of ‘talking’ images that made it seamless for the readers of the time to accept its advent.<sup>12</sup> If we consider the cultural, visual and literary environments in which photonovels were born, we could argue that photonovels already practiced what television historian Lynn Spigel described as “not just a remediation of old entertainment forms”, but also and especially as “an eclectic mixture of old and new”.<sup>13</sup> The photonovel did not exist in a “vacuum apart from other visual arts”; instead it blossomed from such a context and shared the dynamics and characters of it. Ermanno Detti sketches a history of sentimental images, which started in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and moved through cards depicting romantic scenes that lovers used to decorate love letters, postcards with serialized romantic stories, and stationery with loving couples and sentimental comics.<sup>14</sup> While these are undoubtedly important early examples of sentimental visual material and as such paved the road for the naissance of the photonovel, for the purposes of this work particular attention is given to two central models that preceded the photonovel by only a few decades or years and helped shape its esthetics.

If at first sight the photonovel might remind one of comics, given the similarities in page layout as well as the common use of speech balloons,<sup>15</sup> its closer roots were however in a different tradition, that of the film-novel and the drawn-novel, a particular and now totally forgotten subtype of comics. Specifically, the film-novel, born around the 1910s, was initially “the retelling in prose of a movie’s narrative”.<sup>16</sup> In the following decade the sporadic illustrations and photographs that accompanied this retelling gained more and more prominence, giving life to fully illustrated film-novels that juxtaposed film stills with captions and dialogue from the film in order to retell the movie (Figure 4).<sup>17</sup> Their success in the 1920s and 1930s went hand in hand with the rise of Hollywood’s star system. Film-novels, far from being perceived as a threat to or a competitor of the movie they retold, were integrated into a larger advertising strategy that linked the public space of the cinema, where the films were seen, with the private space of home, where the film-novels



Figure 4: Film-novel "Giubbe Rosse" ("Northwest Mounted Police") by Cecil B. De Mille, 1940. (Quoted from Morreale, *Lo Schermo di carta*, p. 50)



were read, favorite scenes were relived and images were cut out and collected. Typical of the modern cultural industry according to De Berti, the aim was thus to offer viewers/readers the chance to enjoy both cultural products, the one prolonging the pleasure of the other.<sup>18</sup>

Stemming from the world of cinema and the illustrated film-novels, the drawn-novel (Figure 5) was a new product launched on the market of women's weeklies after World War II in an attempt to appeal to a large number of readers.<sup>19</sup> It was specifically Cino Del Duca, the founder of the Italian magazine *Grand Hôtel* together with his brothers Domenico and Alceo, who realized that what readers needed was a hybrid item that merged in a completely new way, for a new audience and in a new magazine format, elements from comics, melodrama and cinema.<sup>20</sup> The drawn-novel was in fact drawn, thus reminding one of comics, but its style was cinematographic and its content revolved around romance.

*The story in a drawn novel [sic] pretends to have been inspired by a Hollywood movie. Its drawings (color wash drawings, technically speaking) aspire to be photorealistic copies of film stills, and the faces of its protagonists simply copy those of famous movie stars, which were ubiquitous on European screens after the war.*<sup>21</sup>

Drawn-novels were published from 1946 in serialized fashion first in *Grand Hôtel* and then in all the competing women's weeklies, where, until then, comics had only occupied a minor space in the magazines. Their success was immediate, so much so that the other contents of these magazines began shrinking or even disappearing altogether in order to allow more space for the much requested drawn-novels.<sup>22</sup> As Turzio observes, the moment was auspicious: Italians were ready to leave the war behind and move onto a happier future, only two months before the newspapers and magazines censored or closed by Mussolini had been relaunched, and the results of the governmental referendum of June 2<sup>nd</sup> had just been announced, turning Italy into a republic.<sup>23</sup>

From the same keenness to find new cultural products that could capture the readers of the postwar period, and tapping into the esthetics established by the illustrated film-novel and the drawn-novel, the photonovel was born. As many authors discussing this topic remarked on,<sup>24</sup> its appearance on the market was sudden and its success immediate. The first photonovel was published in serialized fashion by the magazine *Il Mio Sogno* (*My Dream*, then shortened to *Sogno*), produced by a small publishing Roman house called Novissima (then bought by Rizzoli), on May 8<sup>th</sup> 1947. Compared to *Grand Hôtel*, this new magazine had replaced most of its drawn content with photographs in black and white, which gave the impression of a "more realistic and, above all, cinematographic look".<sup>25</sup> The title of the photonovel was "Nel fondo del cuore" ("Deep in the heart") and it was advertised as a "sentimental novel with photographs".<sup>26</sup> Its scenarist was Stefano Reda and the main actress was a certain Giana Loris, who would later become internationally renowned under the name Gina Lollobrigida.



Figure 5: The first drawn-novel "Anime Incatenate" ("Enchained Souls"), drawn by Walter Molino, published in *Grand Hôtel* on June 29<sup>th</sup> 1946.

Only two weeks later, on May 25<sup>th</sup>, in the pages of the magazine *Bolero Film*, produced by the well-established Milanese publishing company Mondadori, a photonovel also appeared. This time the idea came from the weekly's director Luciano Pedrocchi together with illustrator and scenarist Damiano Damiani and author Franco Cancellieri, and the term 'fotoromanzo' ('photonovel') was coined. The paternity of the new product is difficult to establish: was it Stefano Reda, whose photonovel was published first? Or was it Pedrocchi, Damiani and Cancellieri? The proximity of the publication of the first two photonovels is striking and unfortunately does not help in identifying who came up with the idea first. Some authors<sup>27</sup> mention Cesare Zavattini as well, the Italian neo-realist screenwriter, who had written scenarios for comics in the 1930s and worked for Mondadori. He might have been in fact the person behind the conception of *Bolero Film* and, although this has never been confirmed, it is certain that he wrote scenarios for some photonovels published in the magazine.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to this, photonovel author Hubert Serra, in his autobiography, recalls a mysterious story that was told within the walls of Éditions Mondiales of an anonymous somebody who had presented to an Italian publishing house of popular magazines a weekly mockup that contained a photonovel he had created. His idea was that, while drawings were expensive, took a long time to produce and relied on the expertise of experienced illustrators, swapping them for photographs would turn out to be cheaper and faster. The idea stuck with the publisher, but the man behind it disappeared.<sup>29</sup>

Whoever thought of it first, the photonovel turned out to be extremely successful and was quickly picked up by most of the other popular women's weeklies of the time. In France the first photonovel appeared on June 27<sup>th</sup> 1949 in the magazine *Festival*, quickly followed, a month and a half later, by the first photonovel in *Nous Deux*. This latter was particularly important because of its popularity. *Nous Deux* was in fact one of the leading weeklies in France, modeled on the Italian *Grand Hôtel*. Both magazines had been founded by the brothers Del Duca, first in Italy and then exported to France, where Cino had established his headquarters.<sup>30</sup> First publishing drawn-novels, both magazines began regularly including photonovels from 1950, showing that the interest of readers had shifted from one to the other, preferring the stories with photographs to the drawn ones. This was an economic advantage for the publishers of course, who could rely on less experienced personnel to take photographs instead of well-trained artists working as illustrators for the publishing industry.<sup>31</sup> It is interesting to note, especially in light of the discussion on Belgian photonovels that will follow in the next chapters, that in the beginning the publication of photonovels in France was mainly a matter of import and translation from Italy.<sup>32</sup> The stories were in fact initially rather bought from Italian magazines than produced by in-house staff, but the situation rapidly changed once the popularity of photonovels persisted and magazines fully integrated the photonovel into their selling strategies.<sup>33</sup>

In Belgium, the first photonovels appeared almost as soon as the phenomenon started, brought to the country by French (and possibly Italian)<sup>34</sup> magazines that published them, which were distributed in Belgium as well. Only in 1954 did Belgian women's weeklies begin publishing photonovels as well, and in a matter of a few years all the major magazines featured their own photonovels, as we will see in Chapter 3. The historical context in which they appeared was not so different from the French and Italian one, but nonetheless presented some differences that might explain the delay in the production of photonovels. Although plagued by destruction and poverty, the Belgian economic and industrial infrastructure had survived World War II relatively well compared to other European countries, which resulted in what some called the "Belgian wonder": a surprising growth of the Belgian economy and industry right after the war, due to the reduced competition from other countries, which needed more time to heal from the war, and the intensive effort to reconstruct.<sup>35</sup> However, as early as 1948 and 1949 the situation began to change. Neighboring countries, also with the help of the Marshall Plan, slowly started to recover and modernized their industry to the point that they could compete with and surpass the Belgian industry. Sensitive to international developments, the Belgian economy and industry began to lag behind in their struggle to keep pace with other countries. Segers reports that while in 1947 unemployed people numbered 68,000, in 1948 the number had risen to 129,000 and to 235,000 in 1949, and in the mid-1950s it reached more than a quarter million, most of the unemployed coming from Flanders; to better understand the situation, the author notices that between 1947 and 1961 only 60,000 new jobs were created, against the 350,000 new ones during the golden sixties.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, it was during the 1950s that the foundations of the modern, postwar welfare society were put in place, with an automatized wage indexation, a working week of five days, and paid holidays for workers. These same workers, however, were often forced to commute quite far to find jobs, either to the big cities or over the borders, with 10,000 and 40,000 traveling each day to the Netherlands and France respectively.<sup>37</sup> The 1950s were thus characterized by ups and downs and can be seen as a bridge between the reconstruction of the late 1940s and the economic growth of the 1960s, an "ever-changing interlude towards the modern consumer society."<sup>38</sup> Women's weeklies and photonovels, as will be discussed below, played a role in the spreading of this consumer society, in addition to offering readers a moment of reprieve from the difficulties of these years.

The popularity of the photonovel continued, almost unchanged, over the years, in Italy and France certainly until the 1970s. In Belgium, after the immobility of the 1950s, the period between 1960s and 1973 witnessed fast growth.<sup>39</sup> Many women's weeklies added photonovels to their offering in these years, until, as we will see, the emancipatory movements of the late 1960s put a stop to the publication of many photonovels and women's weeklies that had not been able to adapt to the changing needs of readers. It was, however, the growing dominating power of television, which took up the main roles of

entertainment and popularization of norms typical of the photonovel until then, that led to a loss of interest in the photonovel and, consequently, its downfall. The strenuous competition with other models and genres, which proved to be more appealing to the new generation, the photonovel's own formula, which had worked for many years but was now perceived as entirely exhausted, and the rise in production costs, which, unlike cinema, could not rely on external funding or co-productions, were also elements that led to the disappearance of photonovels.<sup>40</sup>

### 1.3 Fame versus shame

Although the drawn-novel was popular among readers, it was the photonovel that enjoyed widespread appreciation and success in the magazines that specialized in this new type of graphic narrative.<sup>41</sup> Baetens observes why this preference could be considered rather enigmatic, especially in the first years of the photonovel. While the drawn-novel, although a new genre, could rely on a long tradition of drawn material that was well established and played by a known set of rules, on the contrary, and in comparison with the drawn-novel, the newly born photonovel seemed to be an impoverished reading for a number of reasons. First of all, we see the disappearance of the dynamic layout of the drawn-novel, which could not be equaled when making use of photographs. The photonovel used a rather static page layout structure, not yet experimenting with more dynamic options as the drawn-novel had been doing from the start. Secondly, photonovels needed to learn how to integrate texts and images. Not wanting to put the texts under the images like in illustrated film-novels, photonovels strived to find a place for the texts within the space of the image, as typical of the drawn-novel. This was initially problematic, since close-up photographs usually did not present enough space to accommodate speech balloons, causing a yet unbalanced result. Thirdly, the impression of movement was difficult to capture in photography, especially in singular images, while drawings (and thus drawn-novels) could rely on existing techniques and processes to deal with the possible difficulty. Lastly, the printing techniques of the time and the low-quality paper used did not flatter printed photography, as we will see in section 4.2, while drawings were much less impacted by this.<sup>42</sup>

It seems clear, however, that these were not determining factors for the readers of the time, who still preferred the photonovel despite its initial need to slightly tweak and change in order to settle on a working model. The key of this success cannot be found only in the dominating presence of feelings and in the satisfaction of needs and dreams of warmth and happy emotions, which certainly, as Detti suggests, could help explain the constant popularity of the sentimental genre over time.<sup>43</sup> Looking at the specific case of photonovels, photography, instead of drawings, was without doubt a winning element. Firstly, it was economically advantageous for the producers of photonovels. Making one

page of a photonovel must have cost less than one of a drawn-novel – photography was faster and did not necessarily require the specialized hand of expert artists. This seems to be confirmed by a simple fact: “it is difficult to imagine that the owners of the sentimental press would encourage a new genre if this was more costly than the one that still offered much satisfaction when photonovels first appeared.”<sup>44</sup> Secondly, photography spoke of modernity and was certainly felt by the readers to be more modern than drawings.<sup>45</sup> As such, it dialogued more closely with the general growing presence of photographs in magazines that was due to the technical advancements of the time. Lastly, photography was still strongly linked with an idea of realism. In the case of photonovels, as Baetens remarks on, this realism “was not that of the stories, in spite of regular attempts to replace the overtly melodramatic story lines with more realistic content. [...] The realism was that of faces, bodies, objects, and settings, all immediately recognizable and hence fundamental to building a relation of complicity between magazine, story, and reader, which was the key to success for all forms of popular fiction of the period.”<sup>46</sup> The photography of photonovels portrayed familiar images that, as a consequence, began to gain an additional, inexplicit role: that of models. As readers could relate more and more to the characters of the stories – which tended to take place in present times and follow ‘common’ people – they started to pick up a whole wealth of information from photonovels, such as the proper way to dress for specific occasions and how to behave in certain situations.<sup>47</sup> The reading of photonovels was thus not only limited to following the narrative week after week and knowing developments and the characters, but was enriched by a constant decoding of the texts and visual elements by the readers.

In Italy twice as many photonovels and, more generally, illustrated popular magazines were bought than books. Although postwar Italy was characterized by little interest in reading and high levels of analphabetism, these magazines were nonetheless read – as well as looked at – by millions.<sup>48</sup> The reasons for this were varied, and we can imagine that they also held for other countries where the photonovel was a hit. In addition to the alluring and modern presence of photography, the accessibility of women’s weeklies, price-wise, made them appealing “to readers who formerly could not afford to buy magazines”.<sup>49</sup> Content-wise, the recognizable, easy-to-follow stories lowered the threshold to reading, drawing people closer if not to books, at least, as Bravo notices, to their minimum unifying factor, the page.<sup>50</sup> The popularity of these weeklies also resulted in their wide distribution, which also reached poor or secluded towns and villages, where little else was available in terms of education, information and entertainment, playing an important role in the process of spreading literacy.<sup>51</sup>

Another reason was certainly what Turzio calls “riavvolgimento narrativo” (“narrative rewind”), referring to the possibility offered to readers of looking back to the stories, leafing through the pages and re-reading them any time they wanted. In comparison to cinema, which was a standalone event, photonovels allowed readers to view and re-view

their favorite passages, collect the images and keep the memory alive of all the dreamy moments.<sup>52</sup> In a time when television was not yet a common household item and there was no talk of recording, rewinding and replaying, popular magazines were one of the few items that could bring home not only general information and advice on all kinds of topics (home, children, health, travel, and so on), but also all the wealth of visual material that was quickly spreading in those years.

As Turzio notices, “visual reading becomes thus the most used and apparently most effective means to introduce the possibility of cultural change”.<sup>53</sup> Photonovels portrayed a specific lifestyle that, though recognizable for the readers, did not entirely depict the kind of life they led, but a more desirable version of it, filled with fulfilled dreams and expectations, modernity and love. The themes portrayed did not offer a homogeneous flow of information, but rather a patchwork that, spread throughout the stories and the magazine as a whole, worked as a mediator between the traditional values of the time and new, modern ones.<sup>54</sup> The happy ending was a crucial element in this context, because it grounded and enforced the lifestyle captured by the photonovel. After the hardship of the war, readers needed relatable stories that pictured a better reality and could provide the impression that everything would eventually turn out fine.<sup>55</sup> Robyn Warhol refers to popular narrative forms as “technologies of affect” in that they provide structures of feeling in the daily lives of their readers/viewers.<sup>56</sup> The photonovel, although not openly discussed by the author, certainly belongs to the sentimental genres she explores and to the “pop-formulas [that] can be astonishingly effective in evoking predictable patterns of feeling”.<sup>57</sup> Warhol identifies a number of “good ideals” informing sentimental culture that can be considered as characteristic of the photonovel as well. What she calls the persistence of hopefulness and willingness, for example, relates to the feel-good stories and the happy ending.<sup>58</sup> As seen above, the purpose of the happy ending and the fulfillment of dreams was precisely that of offering a feeling of hope or reprieve from the hard reality of the years following the war. Particularly relevant for this discussion is Warhol’s ideal of affirmation of community. In photonovels this ideal played out on two main levels. On the one hand, there was the community, as can be read in Turzio: the photonovel was read out loud, in groups, as a shared moment that also included those who could not read.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, the community was the one that the magazines themselves strived to create through their willingness to speak to and dialogue with women, and to become a trusted source where women, united in light of their femaleness, could find a welcoming, understanding and entertaining place.<sup>60</sup> As Bernardes Habert points out, this resulted, also thanks to the space dedicated to readers’ letters, in a feeling of being part of a group, where readers – and particularly the ‘loyal’ ones who regularly bought the magazine – felt like they belonged to a community that spoke the same language and had the same values. Having found this new community, readers could detach from their group of origin and feel integrated into the new group, which was romantic and imaginary, and yet felt more

real and gratifying than the one of origin.<sup>61</sup> The feeling of participation and belonging to a group worked to reinforce the role of photonovels as models and mediators, validating them, once again, as the most effective means to introduce changes and influence readers.

Like many of the mass-produced products falling within the categories of sentimental or popular, the photonovel, during its years of maximum popularity, was the victim of a paradox. Despite its success and merits, it was either ignored, shunned or openly despised by many, and, as Detti convincingly says, “[it was] banished among the things one does not talk about or for which one spares only a contemptuous, cursory irony”.<sup>62</sup> Saint-Michel observes that the “détenteurs de la Culture” (“holders of Culture”), as he calls them, showed no interest in the photonovel and harshly criticized it.<sup>63</sup> Drawing from De Certeau, Turzio remarks on how the ruling class, while attempting to control what is perceived as ‘other’, denies it any kind of esthetic or moral value and delegitimizes it. This, according to the author, results in an internal cultural exoticism that characterizes the photonovel as “an exotic object to read covertly, to leave to rot in the basement, to analyze with an entomological approach and, above all, not to mention as an example of qualitative production.”<sup>64</sup> The reasons for this cultural alienation are not straightforward, often contradictory and grounded in cultural biases.<sup>65</sup> Already in 1979, Anelli et al. had noted the following:

*Very little has been said specifically [on the photonovel] and what little there is is tarnished by a demeaning and a priori condemning attitude, an attitude typical of the so-called “apocalypitics”, who believe that all mass products are subjected to the laws of consumerism, are repetitive, not creative and thus also not stimulating; they spread a standardized culture that, following the dominant style, has no vitality nor change power. And as if this was not enough, for the photonovel there are some additional depreciations: that it is a sentimental product, sugar-coated, for a female audience, and as such second-rated; that it uses images, that is to say a less worthy means in comparison to the written word, less useful and important for intellectual progress and learning growth.*<sup>66</sup>

Since its birth, the photonovel fell into a larger discourse on high and low culture. Belonging to popular literature, the photonovel endured its criticism and scorn, often stemming from prejudices that would consider anything lowbrow as uninteresting and unworthy of any kind of attention – the attitude of those Anelli et al. call “apocalypitics”, borrowing the term from Umberto Eco, who uses it to define those who consider mass culture as a clear sign of irrecoverable loss for the man of culture.<sup>67</sup> The fact that the magazines publishing photonovels were extremely cheap and the paper quality was poor were elements that did not help the photonovel improve its reputation, ostracized as a ‘cheap’ product in every sense of the word.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, an additional aspect detrimental to the image of the photonovel was the perceived audience, thought to consist of housewives and women



of poor means and education.<sup>69</sup> The fact that statistical studies showed that many middle- and upper-class people, both men and women, read photonovels as well never truly managed to breach the wall of prejudices that had already formed.<sup>70</sup>

Such a low opinion of photonovels, maintained mainly by those who considered themselves as well educated, had a strong impact on the production side. Many people who authored, created, wrote the scenarios or published photonovels did so either in anonymity, used pseudonyms or tried to keep this line of work a secret. There was a conscious attempt at detaching one's name from a profession that was considered anything but prestigious. The publishing house Mondadori, for example, kept an orderly record of all its publications that surprisingly (or perhaps unsurprisingly) never included the many photonovels that came out of its printing presses. Actors of photonovels, while often finding fame thanks to the popularity of the photonovel, which put them into the spotlight and worked as a launchpad, moved away from it and never looked back, as if beginning their acting career as actors of photonovels was something to be ashamed of and best kept quiet. As Bonifazio reports, actresses Gina Lollobrigida and Sophia Loren both began their career as actresses of photonovels, but neither ever spoke of it openly.<sup>71</sup> "When involved in the business, directors or performers (especially when they already had or wished for a film career) felt the need to justify their decision on economic needs or argued that they thought of embarking on a pedagogical mission."<sup>72</sup> It should be noted that photographers could also experience the same professional shaming deriving from working in the world of photonovels. An internationally renowned photographer like Federico Vender, hired by Rizzoli to work for the photonovels of *Luna Park*, would keep his work for photonovels separate and distinct from that in art photography. However, in general, photographers seemed to be less worried about a possible tarnished reputation. The tendency to use pseudonyms seems to be less present and this might be because they were often not professional photographers, or, when they were, they had other works in the field at the same time, or because the field of photography was slightly less established.

A common criticism of the photonovel had to do with the melodramatic and sentimental tone of its stories. No literary legitimacy was recognized for the photonovel, seen on the contrary as a dangerous product because it entertained a large number of readers who, instead, could have potentially been dedicating their time to what was considered 'real' literature.<sup>73</sup> Naturally this criticism failed to acknowledge the important role of photonovels in bringing people, especially those less literate, close to a literary format, albeit that of the women's weekly.<sup>74</sup> The coexistence on the same page of images and texts was key to it, but also reason for scorn, seen as a sign of simplicity, if not outright stupidity, and of cultural degradation.<sup>75</sup> Photonovels became the embodiment of "vulgarity, banality, frivolousness"<sup>76</sup> and this derogatory judgment was reflected on the readers of photonovel, who were seen as passive, naïve and silly.<sup>77</sup> Reading photonovels for

a moment of entertainment or escapism became synonymous with being manipulated into passive behavior, a behavior that was justified and promoted: instead of fighting for social change, photonovels were seen as a means to inject conformism into their readers and to turn what was normal desirable.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, these stories, surrounded by pages of advertisements for the most diverse products, promoted a consumerist lifestyle where an individual could participate in society only by joining a logic of consumption.<sup>79</sup>

*These publications are thus the conscious means of control implemented by publishing companies to induce young women to accept passively the socio-political situation that makes money on their misery and leads them to downfall (to be understood as moral and social).<sup>80</sup>*

The photonovel became in this sense the expression of a Western consumerist lifestyle that was focused on personal gains and triumphs, and it popularized consumerist models in terms of relationships and fashion in addition to glorifying movie stardom and specific esthetical paradigms.<sup>81</sup> After years of embargo on American products, American popular culture invaded Europe after World War II. This was perceived as problematic in light of the “anti-Americanism that had been expressed in different forms and in varying intensity since the 1940s in most European countries by the political right and left alike”.<sup>82</sup>

Concerning the photonovel in particular, the greatest worries in this sense were expressed especially by Catholics and Catholic government officials on the one hand and communist intellectuals and politicians on the other. The former “were specifically concerned with representations of women’s sexual and moral conduct”<sup>83</sup> and the intrinsic risk of spoiling the younger generation.<sup>84</sup> The latter despised the instilled passive behavior, which promoted individualism and greed instead of desire to fight social injustices and overcome class conflicts.<sup>85</sup> Demonized by both is the idea of the ‘dream’, seen as a dangerous notion because it led readers to fantasize an unrealistic world, wishing for fame, love or adventures that were detached from the reality of the time.<sup>86</sup>

In this whole discussion the presence of what Bonifazio calls the “‘elitist vision’ of culture” is central.<sup>87</sup> The attitude maintained by intellectuals, journalists, Catholics, communists and politicians was one of seriousness, education and moral elevation, all necessary traits to defeat the demonized mass culture. The photonovel became thus the “oppio dei popoli” (“opium of the masses”),<sup>88</sup> but without any real understanding of it and, as Bravo notices, “no other cultural or subcultural field has been as discussed while knowing so little about it.”<sup>89</sup> Turzio identifies the same problem: the educated bourgeoisie had difficulties communicating with the populace and understanding the nature of the photonovel.<sup>90</sup> The contempt that characterized the general, superficial understanding of the photonovels in the years of its largest success resulted in the lack of studies on this matter, an issue that has been seriously tackled only in the past decade and that this work hopes to further.

## 1.4 Photonovels: between tradition and emancipation

The impression of reality of the photonovels not only helped normalize a series of behavioral responses and fashion choices, but also introduced values of a consumerist society, typically stemming from the United States (at least in Italy; in the case of Belgium, a country so close to France, it is certainly safer to replace ‘American’ with ‘Western’). Although photonovels were definitely not American, the models that influenced them, as seen above, were also inspired by Hollywood cinema and informed by the consumerism typical of the postwar period, which critical voices from the far left as well as the morally conservative right almost automatically labeled ‘American’. After the years of the war and the embargo on American products, these were finally resurfacing in Western Europe, bringing with them the ideals and values of a society characterized by a high-consumption economy.<sup>91</sup> Postwar consumerism in women’s weeklies was especially visible in the amount of goods on display, either as advertisements or within the stories such as the photonovels.<sup>92</sup> After all, the invention and spread of all new household appliances had the unspoken aim of painting a rosy picture of life as a housewife.<sup>93</sup> The power and freedom that women had acquired during the war, having had to step in to fill jobs that were left vacant by men going to war, was not looked favorably upon by the ruling class, which was mainly made up of men.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, in order to convince women to go back to their pre-war domestic roles as mothers and housewives, an incentive was needed: the new household appliances, which, as shiny new toys, would keep women busy in the house.<sup>95</sup>

The role of the photonovel in the emancipation of women, or lack thereof, was double. In general terms, the photonovel was a rather conservative genre, repeating patterns and roles typical of a patriarchal society. However, while replaying the typical romantic story that culminated in marriage, authors have noticed that the portrayal of women in (some) photonovels showed an attempt to break with tradition, while remaining within its boundaries. As Bravo notices, the harsh criticism of photonovels, which saw them as a popular product for the working class and especially for uneducated women, only focused on the dangerous nature of the photonovel as a manipulator of young and naïve women, while denying readers any sort of agency.

*Intellectuals and politicians, almost as a whole, keep thinking that people’s freedom depends on their economic and working positions, they are convinced that only a good academic curriculum and a political allegiance to the righteous side can defend from the excessive power of media; and they are completely extraneous to the idea that also non hegemonic classes, also the rural populace, and even women, can be able to negotiate their adhesion to the models, take their measures and distance themselves from them.*<sup>96</sup>

The reality was different. On the one hand, the readers of photonovels were not only poor and uneducated women, but came from various social backgrounds;<sup>97</sup> on the other hand, these readers were far from passive. This has been demonstrated by Bonifazio in her recent work aptly titled *The Photoromance. A feminist reading of popular culture*. It suffices to say that the author analyzes the women of photonovels both as characters of the stories, but especially as readers and ‘fans’. Instead of passive readers afflicted by cultural backwardness, Bonifazio points out the agency of these women in co-shaping the content and sharing in the fandom that existed around photonovels. “Neither emancipated nor coopted by the media system, these fans [...] undermined the patriarchal order of Italian culture and society, particularly in the fifties and sixties, as well as the aims of radical feminist groups in the 1970s.”<sup>98</sup> If, on the one hand, the content of photonovels did not entirely conform to the conservative models of femininity, portraying a woman whose sexuality was not denied, who achieved professional goals and who used beauty to her advantage, on the other hand it played, to borrow a term from McRobbie, a key role in spreading a “faux feminism” that was nonetheless still enclosed in a patriarchal tradition of gender roles.

Sullerot, writing about photonovels in the 1960s, noted that around 50% of the female characters in French photonovels worked and were presented in the story in the context of their work. She compared this number with the actual employment rate of women in France at the same time, which was only 34% and mainly consisted of modest jobs. The author then identified modest jobs and a situation that bordered misery as a transfer element for the readers, who could easily identify themselves in the characters. The fact that photonovel women eventually moved out of their situation of poverty or difficulty had the function of giving hope to the readers for a brighter future. This was however mainly synonymous with a good marriage to a wealthy man, which would provide economic stability together with social standing. The male characters had much better jobs than their female companions, often jobs like doctor or officer where they had to wear uniforms. While women worked for a living, men’s positioning seemed to satisfy a need for ‘masculine values’ that would please the readers.<sup>99</sup>

A closer look at the Belgian corpus reveals a similar pattern. Photonovel author Hubert Serra remarks on how his female characters were different from the typical Italian ones because they were much stronger and more independent, and fought for their beliefs, their love and their professional life.<sup>100</sup> The stories moved on the boundaries of tradition and certainly did not promote a social revolution, but they nonetheless presented stronger female models readers could be inspired by. An extreme example of this was the photonovel “Pilote d’essai / Proefpilot”, published in *Lectures d’Aujourd’hui / Lectuur voor Allen* in 1956. The story, though romanticized, revolved around aviator Jacqueline Auriol, who starred as herself in the photonovel, thus offering readers a clear example of a powerful woman holding a job that was traditionally considered masculine.

The second half of the 1960s in Belgium saw the spread of the second wave of feminism, which fought for the emancipation of women, for better and more equal working opportunities, for more chances for education, and for a different kind of family where partners were equal and motherhood was not the sole role of the woman.<sup>101</sup> As new, secularized themes, such as abortion, divorce and contraceptives made it into the public debate, magazines had the choice to either discuss them openly or to maintain a more conservative stance.<sup>102</sup> Undoubtedly some of the Belgian magazines that published photonovels made a conscious effort to promote a positive image of the woman, keep pace with the times and give useful tips on these subjects, while also publishing sentimental stories, articles on the household, recipes and sewing patterns (these Belgian magazines were also more middle class than most of the specialized French weeklies). The result was a sort of hybrid that straddled the line between traditional gender roles and emancipatory aspirations.

Marthe de Prelle, editor-in-chief of the magazine *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*, in an interview in 1978 reflected on the role of the magazine over the years in light of feminism. She maintained that the magazine had always been feminist, in the beginning functioning by proposing positive models to readers, then also introducing discussions on specific hot topics of the time.<sup>103</sup> As early as the 1930s, for example, the magazine benefited from a collaboration with lawyer Yvonne Netter and political journalist Carmen Ennesch, who fought to reform wedding contracts, to defend the working woman, including if married, and for equal working rights. Ennesch even wrote an editorial starting in 1934 on professional orientation for women.<sup>104</sup> When asked about the integration of such content with that which seemed to perpetuate the image of the domestic woman, de Prelle pointed out, on the one hand, that they needed to think strategically: the magazine needed to sell and such topics were requested and expected by readers. On the other hand, she suggested looking at them as having a real, practical usefulness that helped simplify women's daily life. An economic reason was also given when asked about the presence of photonovels, in addition to specifying the often literary roots of many of the photonovels they published (as if this would elevate their status) and the need for their readers to have a moment for themselves to dream away. Biased as they are, these editorial comments, which definitely also apply to the photonovel policy of the magazine, as clearly explained by Hubert Serra in his memoirs,<sup>105</sup> give a good idea of the 'soft' approach to emancipation and female empowerment as promoted by *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*:

*Generally speaking, our policy is not to provoke our readers because, as we have told you, they do not like the ground to slip under their feet. If we want to make them evolve, in a certain sense, it has to be gradually. They hate criticism. But it is true that we could look in this sense for new themes. We are constantly working on it. The most exciting part of our work is this constant search, which we have undertaken in a spirit of justice. Honesty is our first requirement.<sup>106</sup>*

In the magazine *Piccolo*, a note from the editor preceded the publication of its first photonovel. Aware of the poor reputation of photonovels, the letter touched upon the subject of women's emancipation, bearing witness to the controversy present at the time between reading photonovels and emancipation. With this premise the editor wanted to make a statement that could explain the magazine's policy of suddenly adding to photonovels to its reading offering. The magazine thus profiled itself as conscious of the fact that photonovels were considered by the public opinion as frivolous, love-centered stories that repeated over and over the traditional gender roles. *Piccolo* did not reject the central role of love and marriage, but at the same time it also tried to endorse a different view on what women could do and the world they were living in. The magazine's line was not to challenge the traditional opinion on the photonovel or to defend the genre against contempt and derision, but to find a new balance between the old and the new, without scaring less progressive readers.<sup>107</sup> It is possibly this hybrid view, or maybe the inability to keep the magazine relevant during the changing times, that resulted in many photonovels not surviving the second wave of feminism,<sup>108</sup> at least not in Belgium. As shown by the already mentioned photonovel exhibition in Reggio Emilia, the photonovel format had not been discarded by progressive and even revolutionary voices in Italy, with politically committed works on themes such as divorce, contraception and abortion.

It is maybe interesting to conclude this discussion with a look at the division of work when it came to magazines and photonovels. Traditionally, women were largely under-represented in the newsrooms;<sup>109</sup> editors-in-chief, magazine staff and those occupying managerial positions were male, often, as Bravo notices, closer to the leftist intellectuals who despised photonovels than to their readers.<sup>110</sup> In the context of women's weeklies, the numerical situation seemed somewhat better, with a higher number of women taking a leadership role within the magazines, although the decision-making positions were always reserved to men.<sup>111</sup> This was, as Peeters notices, almost a necessity: women who wanted to be journalists were often not hired by newspapers or other kinds of magazines, and only found openings within the sentimental press, which was seen as a lower form of journalism.<sup>112</sup> A closer look at photonovel production, more specifically, shows that this was a world dominated by men.<sup>113</sup> As will be discussed in Chapter 4, authors, scenarists, photographers and assistants working on the sets of photonovels were generally men, with only very few exceptions. This is not entirely surprising, since, as just noticed, women hardly found job openings within the sector. It is nonetheless a striking fact if we consider that the photonovel was in the common opinion a women's affair.

## Notes

1. It should be noted that women's weeklies are only touched upon here in light of the discussion on women's emancipation. An in-depth analysis of their role more generally can be found in Chapter 3.
2. See for example Bravo, *Il fotoromanzo*; Turzio, *Il Fotoromanzo* and Faber, Minuit, and Takodjerad, *Nous Deux*.
3. *Fictions à la chaîne. Littératures sérielles et cultures médiatiques* (Paris: Seuil, 2017).
4. *Media of Serial Narrative* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2017)
5. See for instance Volker Mergenthaler, Nora Ramtke, and Monika Schmitz-Emans, eds, *Journalen lesen. Keüreibbruch-Anschlusslektüren. Reading Journals. Coherence and Interruption* (Hannover: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2022).
6. Baetens, *Pour le roman-photo*, 15.
7. Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 16.
8. Sullerot, *La Presse Féminine*, 93–94.
9. Hubert Serra, *Voyage au cœur du roman-photo: Autobiographie* (Paris: Les Indes savantes, 2017), 7.
10. Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 7.
11. Colangelo and Di Gregorio, “Un roman-photo déviant de l'intérieur?”. Original text: “Qu'on le prive de sa charpente sentimentale, qu'on bouleverse son rapport texte-image ou qu'on l'extrait de son magazine, et le roman-photo change de nature (bande dessinée, photoreportage), intéresse moins [...] ou tend à disparaître (on n'en récolte presque jamais dans des livres).”
12. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 15.
13. Lynn Spigel, *TV by Design. Modern art and the rise of network television* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 7.
14. Ermanno Detti, *Le Carte Rosa: Storia del Fotoromanzo e della Narrativa Popolare* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1990), 9–26.
15. For a full discussion on the differences among the two, see Baetens, *Roman-photo*, 95–129.
16. Baetens, *Film Photonovel*, 1.
17. Emiliano Morreale, “Il sipario strappato. Introduzione ai cineromanzi,” in *Gianni Amelio presenta lo schermo di carta. Storia e storie dei cineromanzi*, ed. Emiliano Morreale (Turin: Museo Nazionale del Cinema & Il Castoro, 2007), 32.
18. Raffaele De Berti, “I filmi appassionanti. Breve storia dei cineracconti,” in *Gianni Amelio presenta lo schermo di carta. Storia e storie dei cineromanzi*, ed. Emiliano Morreale (Turin: Museo Nazionale del Cinema & Il Castoro, 2007), 106.
19. Baetens, *Film Photonovel*, 11–12.

20. For a detailed biography of Cino Del Duca, see Isabelle Antonutti, *Cino Del Duca. De Tarzan à Nous deux, Itinéraire d'un patron de presse* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013).
21. Baetens, *Film Photonovel*, 12. Actually, the drawn-novel (and later on the film photonovel as well) reappropriates two types of filmic images, which may be mixed on the same page: film stills (in the narrow sense of the word: pictures made on the set or in the studio in order to promote both the star and the movie) and film frames (which are part of the actual reels projected in the theaters).
22. *Ibid.*, 13. For a full discussion on drawn-novels and their relationship with photonovels, see Baetens, “The Roman Dessiné”.
23. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 27.
24. On the birth of photonovels, the main sources are Baetens, *Roman-photo*, Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, Giet, *Nous Deux 1947–1997*, Saint-Michel, *Roman-photo*, Sullerot, *Presse Féminine*, Faber, *Minuit*, and Takodjerad, *Nous Deux*, and Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*. This chapter relies on the works of these authors to sketch a brief historical overview of the origin of the photonovel.
25. Faber, *Minuit*, and Takodjerad, *Nous Deux*, 26.
26. In Italian: “romanzo d’amore a fotogrammi”. This was the branding of the whole magazine, which promised to publish such stories weekly. The name ‘fotoromanzo’ (‘photonovel’) was not yet in use. See Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 15.
27. Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 24, and Faber, *Minuit*, and Takodjerad, *Nous Deux*, 39.
28. This has been established by the curators of the exhibition “Fotoromanzo e poi...” that took place at the Spazio Gerra in Reggio Emilia from April 20<sup>th</sup> to July 19<sup>th</sup> 2018.
29. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 13–14.
30. It should be noted that *Festival* was also published by Del Duca.
31. Baetens, *Film Photonovel*, 13–14.
32. Baetens, *Roman-photo*, 9.
33. Faber, *Minuit*, and Takodjerad, *Nous Deux*, 56.
34. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 122.
35. Yves Segers, “Tussen wederopbouw en golden sixties. Economische transformaties in de jaren vijftig,” in *Het Vlaamse platteland in de fifties*, ed. Sarah Luyten and Yves Segers (Leuven: Davidsfonds Uitgeverij, 2012), 181.
36. *Ibid.*, 182–183.
37. *Ibid.*, 189.
38. *Ibid.*, 181. Original text: “bewogen interludium op weg naar de modern consumptiemaatschappij.”
39. For a detailed historical overview of this period (and in general of Belgium post-1945), see Els Witte and Alain Meyen, *De geschiedenis van België na 1945* (Antwerp: Standaard Uitgeverij, 2006), 81–104.



40. Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 9, and Serra, *Roman-photo*, 119. On the relationship of the photo-novel with television, see Baetens, *Roman-photo*, 39–42.
41. Giet, *Nous Deux 1947–1997*.
42. Baetens, *Roman-photo*, 25.
43. Detti, *Le Carte Rosa*, 15.
44. Baetens, *Roman-photo*, 29. Original text: “il est difficile d’imaginer que les propriétaires de la presse du cœur auraient encouragé un nouveau genre plus couteux que celui qui donnait encore pleinement satisfaction au début des premiers romans-photo.”
45. Sylvette Giet, “Le roman-photo sentimental traditionnel lu en France,” in *Le Roman-photo, Actes du colloque de Calaceite (Fondation Noeisis) 21–28 août 1993*, ed. Jan Baetens and Ana Gonzalez (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 11.
46. Baetens, *Film Photonovel*, 14.
47. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 8, and Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 8.
48. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 8.
49. Baetens, *Film Photonovel*, 11.
50. Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 10.
51. *Ibid.*, 86.
52. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 22.
53. *Ibid.*, 8. Original text: “La lettura visiva di configura quindi come il veicolo più utilizzato e apparentemente efficace per introdurre possibilità di cambiamento culturale.”
54. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 72, and Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 85–86.
55. Detti, *Le Carte Rosa*, 14, and Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 82–83.
56. Robyn R. Warhol, *Having a Good Cry: Effeminate Feelings and Pop-culture Forms* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2003), 7.
57. *Ibid.*, xvi.
58. *Ibid.*, 55–56.
59. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 41.
60. Martina Temmerman and Maaïke Van De Voorde, “Absent Husbands and Whispering Voices: a Critical Analysis of the Representation of Men in Two Popular Flemish Women’s Magazines,” *Journal of Gender Studies* 24, no. 1 (2015): 3–4.
61. Angeluccia Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela e Indústria Cultural: estudo de uma forma de literatura sentimental fabricada para milhões* (Petropolis: Vozes, 1974), 48–49.
62. Detti, *Le Carte Rosa*, 15. Original text: “relegato fra le cose di cui non si parla o alle quali si dedica una sprezzante distratta ironia.”
63. Saint-Michel, *Roman-photo*, 22.
64. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 8. Original text: “un oggetto esotico da leggere di nascosto, da lasciare che si sfaldi in cantina, da analizzare con sguardo entomologico e soprattutto da non citare come esempio di produzione di qualità.”

65. Bravo makes a convincing point in observing how varied and unclear, at times inconsistent, at times contradictory, the critic of the photonovel was. See Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 9–10.
66. Maria Teresa Anelli et al., *Fotoromanzo: fascino e pregiudizio. Storia, documenti e immagini di un grande fenomeno popolare (1946–1978)* (Perugia: Salvelli Editore, 1979), 7–8. Original text: “ben poco è stato detto di specifico e quel poco è viziato da un atteggiamento di svalutazione e condanna a priori, da quell’atteggiamento cioè che è proprio degli ‘apocalittici’, secondo i quali tutti i prodotti di massa sono sottoposti alle leggi del consumismo, sono ripetitivi, non creativi e quindi neppure stimolanti; diffondono una cultural standardizzata che, seguendo il gusto dominante, non ha vitalità né tantomeno carica di rinnovamento. Come non bastasse, per il fotoromanzo si sono aggiunte altre svalutazioni più specifiche: che è un prodotto sentimentale, edulcorato, da pubblico femminile, e perciò stesso di serie B; che utilizza le immagini, un mezzo cioè meno valido della parola scritta, meno utile e significativo per un progresso intellettuale e una crescita dell’apprendimento.”
67. *Ibid.*, 7.
68. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 19.
69. Paola Bonifazio, *The Photoromance. A feminist reading of popular culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2020), 4.
70. Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 78–82.
71. Bonifazio, *The Photoromance*, 190.
72. *Ibid.*, 2.
73. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 69.
74. Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 10. Sullerot even reports that readers of photonovels based on literary works would get acquainted with the works through the photonovels and then read the works themselves, able to digest more easily the body of text that would have previously scared them away, because they already knew “what would happen next”. Evelyne Sullerot, “Photoromans et œuvres littéraires,” *Communications* 2 (1963): 85.
75. Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 114.
76. *Ibid.*, 10. Original text: “volgarità, banalità, frivolezza.”
77. Bonifazio, *The Photoromance*, 1.
78. Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 31–32.
79. *Ibid.*, 32.
80. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 69. Original text: “Queste pubblicazioni sono quindi il consapevole mezzo di controllo adottato dagli editori per indurre le giovani donne ad accettare passivamente la situazione socio-politica che si arricchisce sulla loro miseria e le indirizza così verso la rovina (da intendersi morale e sociale [...]).”
81. Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 56, 101–102.

82. Alexander Stephan, ed., *The Americanization of Europe. Culture, Diplomacy, and Anti-Americanism after 1945*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 1.
83. Paola Bonifazio, "Political Photoromances: The Italian Communist Party, Famiglia Cristiana, and the Struggle for Women's Hearts," *Italian Studies* 72, no. 4 (2017): 394.
84. Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 9.
85. Bonifazio, "Political Photoromances," 394.
86. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 74. It should be noted that both the Communist Party and the Catholics eventually recognized the popularity of the photonovel and made use of it themselves for their own purposes. For more on this, see Bonifazio, "Political Photoromances," and *The Photoromance*, and Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*.
87. Bonifazio, "Political Photoromances," 395.
88. Anelli et al., *Fotoromanzo*, 8.
89. Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 9–10.
90. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 73.
91. Nigel Whiteley, "Toward a Throw-Away Culture. Consumerism, 'Style Obsolescence' and Cultural Theory in the 1950s and 1960s," *Oxford Art Journal* 10, no. 2 (1987): 5.
92. For more on the relationship between advertisements and photonovels within the same magazine, see Chapter 5.
93. Maria Cristina Santana, "From Empowerment to Domesticity: The Case of Rosie the Riveter and the WWII Campaign," *Frontiers in Sociology* 1 (2016): 4.
94. On the contradicting messages that spread after the war concerning what the role of women should have been, see Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 68–76.
95. Santana, "Empowerment to Domesticity," 4–5.
96. Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 120. Original text: "intellettuali e politici quasi in blocco continuano a pensare che la libertà delle persone dipenda dalla loro posizione economica e lavorativa, sono convinti che solo un buon curriculum universitario e l'impegno politico dalla parte giusta possano difendere dalla strapotenza dei media; e sono sideralmente estranei all'idea che anche le classi non egemoni, anche le popolazioni contadine, e addirittura le donne, possono essere in grado di negoziare la loro adesione ai modelli e di prenderne le misure e le distanze."
97. As shown by the audience research in Sullerot, *La Presse Féminine*.
98. Bonifazio, *The Photoromance*, 2.
99. Sullerot, *Presse Féminine*, 116–117.
100. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 70.
101. Witte and Meyen, *Geschiedenis van België*, 96.
102. A detailed analysis of the role of women's weeklies can be found in Chapter 3.
103. Femmes D'Aujourd'hui, "Presse Féminine Et Féminisme," *Les Cahiers Du GRIF* 23, no. 1 (1978): 120.

104. Els Flour, *Bronnen voor de vrouwengeschiedenis in België: deel 2: Repertorium van de feministische en de vrouwenpers 1830–1994* (Brussels: Ministerie van Arbeid en Tewerkstelling, 1995), 195.
105. Serra, *Voyage*, passim.
106. Femmes D’Aujourd’hui, “Presse Féminine,” 123. Original text: “D’une manière générale, notre politique est de ne pas provoquer nos lectrices car, comme nous vous l’avons dit, elles n’aiment pas que le sol se dérobe sous leurs pieds. Si nous voulons les faire évoluer, dans un certain sens, il faut que ce soit progressivement. Elles ont horreur de la contestation. Mais il est vrai que nous pourrions dans cette forme chercher de nouveaux thèmes. Nous nous y employons constamment. Le côté le plus passionnant de notre travail est cette recherche constante que nous avons entre prise dans un esprit de justice. L’honnêteté est notre premier critère.”
107. *Piccolo* no.19, May 8<sup>th</sup> 1960.
108. See Marcella Laub, “Entre conformisme et transgression,” in *Roman-photo*, ed. Marie-Charlotte Calafat and Frédérique Deschamps (Paris/Marseille: Textuel/Mucem, 2017), 84–87.
109. Mieke Ceulemans and Guido Fauconnier, *Mass Media: The Image, Role and Social Conditions of Women. A collection and analysis of research materials* (Paris: UNESCO, 1979), 63–64.
110. Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 25.
111. Ceulemans and Fauconnier, *Mass Media*, 64.
112. Veerle Peeters, *Weekbladpers voor de vrouw: een studie over de gespecialiseerde Nederlandstalige vrouwenweekbladen in België* (Leuven: Acco, 1964), 166.
113. See the analysis in Chapter 4, where directors and photographers are discussed.



## Chapter 2

# Belgian editorial context: a language divide

This chapter focuses on sketching the Belgian editorial context at large, where a few elements are highlighted: the state of publishing after World War II, the large linguistic gap characterizing Belgian literature and the issue of center versus periphery – three almost prototypical aspects of any research on Belgian print culture of the period. The understanding of these aspects is treated as functional to the analysis of the photonoel, as they tie right back into the photonovel’s own, specific history.

As a print phenomenon, the photonovel is rooted in its editorial context. From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Belgian publishers had begun creating a name for themselves and establishing their publishing companies. The two world wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had put a strain on publishing activities, but both times Belgian publishers managed to rise back up and further their works in order to guarantee the existence of a Belgian literature at large.

Particularly during World War II, scarcity of paper had been an obstacle for publishing, necessarily leading to a decrease in publishing activity. On top of that, publishers could not freely print as they wished: they either had to follow the strict guidelines of the Nazi regime and hence collaborate, or stay out of business or flee the country. The situation we find after World War II is one of willingness to go back to a sense of normalcy, but also with a need to punish all those publishers who had worked with the Nazi regime during the time Belgium had been occupied. After the war, publishers who wanted to resume their activity had to prove their political integrity and guarantee that neither they nor their employees had collaborated with the Germans.<sup>1</sup> The purification measures seem to have been more repressive for those publishers, journalists and authors who had kept on working in their field under an occupied government than for those who had momentarily put aside their literary and publishing activities. Being mentioned in the catalogue of publishing houses directed by Germans or by notorious Belgian collaborators equaled

being guilty of having adhered to the ideology of the occupier and was immediately translated into sanctions, such as the impossibility of being published or dismissal from publishing activities.<sup>2</sup> Such measures, which strived to protect the industry from collaborators but also hindered the restarting of the editorial sector, are interpreted by Denis and Klinkenberg as relatively mild in comparison, for example, to France; this seems to testify to the fact that Belgium's political energy was more strongly mobilized by the division between Flanders and Wallonia, worsened by the Royal Question and the results of the 1950 referendum.<sup>3</sup> Be that as it may, the Belgian publishing industry in the postwar period saw a dismantling of the structures that had governed it during the conflict and a comeback of those authors and publishers that had established their work in the years preceding the war in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>4</sup> Some of the publishers and especially authors who had been active during the war managed to keep their activity going by reverting to pseudonyms or by leaning on publishing houses that shared with them views and/or history; these companies however gradually disappeared as the situation went back to normal.<sup>5</sup>

The comeback of publishing after the war was aided, on the one hand, by the availability of paper – after the scarcity during the war, Belgium suddenly had more paper available than France<sup>6</sup> – and, on the other hand, by the restarting of the industries and the coal mines that gave Belgium a strong economic dynamism that allowed, among other things, a rise in industrial publishing.<sup>7</sup> In practice, this meant that smaller publishing houses tended to disappear in favor of fewer, larger publishing companies that relied on modern machinery, bigger premises and a more commercial disposition. This way of publishing, which was faster, more efficient and allowed for larger-scale production, was at the root of the sudden growth of popular literature. Its cheap volumes targeting a mass audience had already existed since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but in the postwar period they witnessed a new wave of production and success.<sup>8</sup> To make this possible, apart from the technical advancement in production, these years mark a shift in the perception and understanding of the book. Removed from its almost sacred pedestal, the book was pushed to become an item that could serve and reach large audiences and different social classes, becoming a medium in the service of the reader.<sup>9</sup> To achieve this goal, new kinds of books such as the so-called ‘pocket books’ were brought out of the possibly intimidating bookstores and placed in kiosks, next to newspapers and magazines, which benefited from this shift themselves.<sup>10</sup> Once the obstacle of where to buy literature was removed and the perception of the book as a friendlier tool for everyone and one that could be produced industrially was reconfigured, paper printing became accessible for any social class and flooded the market, mirroring a pattern of growth and success that also characterized Italy and France – certainly with their own specificities – during these years.<sup>11</sup>

The division between Flanders and Wallonia, which was a particularly hot topic in the second postwar period, had an impact on the publishing industry as well. Literary theorists have noted how this divide had already been present in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century. As argued by Pascal Durand and Tanguy Habrand, the authors of the most recent (and certainly most complete) survey of the Belgian publishing industry:

*The fragile literary publishing was not only caught between two fatal conflicts against lean structures – which form the basics of the editorial apparatus in this field – but also affected, during the same period, by the effects caused, in the imagination and aesthetic ideology of the most prominent writers, by the dislocation of the unitary myth on which the Belgian state was based. While Belgium’s international image emerged heightened from the First World War and Congo gave it the status of a colonial power starting from 1908, the introduction in 1919 of universal male suffrage, the gradual Flemishization of the University of Ghent from 1916 to 1930, the administrative unilingualism adopted from 1932 in Flanders and Wallonia, Brussels being defined by the coexistence of two languages, will in turn impose, with increasingly strong evidence, the political and institutional realities of a linguistically as well as culturally divided state.<sup>12</sup>*

If not necessarily culturally, Belgian literature was divided linguistically. Francophone and netherlandophone literatures in Belgium had in fact a parallel history and evolution, both driven and hindered by different factors – yet, in some cases and particularly in the magazine world, intertwined. The effect that the linguistic rift between Flanders and Wallonia had on francophone production can be framed in the context of the issue of *center versus periphery*, of minor, peripheral and marginal literatures having to face the strong pull of the dominating metropolis and capitals. The francophone production strongly felt the proximity, both geographically and spiritually, of France, and specifically Paris, which created an unusual relationship.<sup>13</sup> This relationship was characterized, on the one hand, by assimilation.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, France dominated the field and dictated the norm, functioning as a reference point for francophone publishers, who, lacking as yet the necessary infrastructure and professionalism, leaned strongly on the French example.<sup>14</sup> France, and in particular Paris, appealed strongly to Belgian authors, who began gravitating towards Paris and an abstract idea of French culture. This led to a new representation of francophone literature in Belgium in the period between the two world wars, aimed at breaking Belgium out of its literary isolation by integrating it into a more modern and avant-gardist French perspective: no longer “Belgian literature”, but “French literature of Belgium”.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, however, Belgian authors and publishers also tried to differentiate themselves from the French tradition by developing their local specificities. As the editorial industry and the literary market in Belgium became more established, it became possible for publishers to take more risks, for example in choosing what manuscripts were to be published. The 1920s and 1930s in particular saw a renaissance of Belgian francophone publishing, characterized by an industry that, refusing the mythical image



of the dominant publishing production, managed to escape the imbalance in power relations with France, to establish its editorial structures and to give space to its own creativity, particularly in less legitimized genres such as youth literature and comics.<sup>16</sup>

The division and tension between Flanders and Wallonia also impacted the netherlandophone publishing of Belgium. With French as the language of the elites, netherlandophone publications had to carve out their path, particularly starting from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, following a growth of political, social and economic awareness in Flanders.<sup>17</sup> As the power of the Flemish community increased, so did the need for netherlandophone publishing. Netherlandophone publishing companies, however, had to face some obstacles. First of all, they needed to establish their position on the market. Initially, the growing amount of netherlandophone literature of Belgium was not mirrored by an equal increase of bookstores where the new publications could find their audience, and the already existing bookstores were not in favor of the inclusion of this new material either. Francophone literature was often preferred over netherlandophone publications and translations of foreign works would more likely be in French than in Dutch. This was due to the more established role of francophone literature in Belgium, which benefited from its long years on the market and the consequent economic security it provided. Meeting and sustaining a larger audience also meant that the production costs could be kept low. Netherlandophone publications were, in this sense, an expensive risk.<sup>18</sup> A second obstacle Flemish publishers had to face was the competition with Dutch publishing. More established and of longer tradition than the newly started Flemish one, the Dutch publishing industry on the one hand had ties in the Belgian market, providing much of the netherlandophone literature, and on the other hand had measures in place to protect its market from a possible incoming flux of Flemish works.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, thanks to strong-willed Flemish publishers and authors, many small initiatives flourished during the 1920s and 1930s and led to a full bloom of Flemish publishing in the 1940s. The war impacted this growth, but did not stop it, and after the war the publication of netherlandophone literature picked up quickly.<sup>20</sup>

The situation we find after World War II is thus characterized by the existence of many publishing companies which, divided by the language barrier, tended to run in parallel and focus on either francophone or netherlandophone production and audiences. The editorial tendency was however much less divided in regards to pulp literature: after the years of war characterized by fewer pages and irregularities in the publication, mass production started in the postwar period and surfed the wave of success well into the 1980s.<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that popular magazines experienced less of a language divide, often published, as we will see, both in French and in Dutch, at times differentiating the content, at times presenting to francophone and netherlandophone audiences exactly the same material. The photonovel proves to be a good example of such a bilingual, cross-linguistic policy, which is almost completely absent from the field of highbrow literature

(where francophone production is only looking at Paris, either positively or negatively, while netherlandophone production is increasingly influenced by the contacts with the center that is Amsterdam). From this point of view, the study of the photonovel really makes an important contribution to our knowledge of Belgian culture, that is, of the culture of Belgium as a country characterized by unity in diversity.

## Notes

1. Ludo Simons, *Geschiedenis Van De Uitgeverij in Vlaanderen* (Tielt: Lannoo, 1984), 159.
2. Pascal Durand and Tanguy Habrand, *Histoire de l'édition en Belgique: XVe–XXIe siècle (Réflexions faites)* (Brussels: Les Impressions nouvelles, 2018), 265.
3. Benoît Denis and Jean-Marie Klinkenberg, *La littérature belge: Précis d'histoire sociale (Espace Nord références)* (Brussels: Labor, 2005), 195–196.
4. Durand and Habrand, *Histoire de l'édition*, 267.
5. Simons, *Geschiedenis*, 159.
6. Durand and Habrand, *Histoire de l'édition*, 272.
7. *Ibid.*, 268.
8. *Ibid.*, 269.
9. *Ibid.*, 275.
10. It should be noted that the first francophone pocket books were published as a collection called Marabout by the homonymous Belgian publishing company.
11. For more on the Italian or French editorial contexts, see Gian Carlo, *Storia dell'editoria letteraria in Italia. 1945–2003* (Turin: Einaudi, 2014), and Roger Chartier and Henri-Jean Martin, *Histoire de l'édition française – Tome 4, Le livre concurrenté (1900–1950)* (Paris: Fayard, 1998).
12. Durand and Habrand, *Histoire de l'édition*, 216–217. Original text: “La fragile édition littéraire s’est non seulement trouvée prise entre deux conflits fatals aux structures légères – qui forment l’essentiel de l’appareil éditorial dans ce domaine –, mais aussi affectée, au cours de la même période, par les effets induits, dans l’imaginaire et l’idéologie esthétique des écrivains les plus en vue, par la dislocation du mythe unitaire sur lequel reposait l’État belge. Alors que l’image internationale de la Belgique est sortie grandie du premier conflit mondial et que le Congo lui confère depuis 1908 le statut d’une puissance coloniale, l’instauration en 1919 du suffrage universel masculin, la flamandisation par étapes de l’université de Gand de 1916 à 1930, l’unilinguisme administratif adopté à partir de 1932 en Flandre et en Wallonie, Bruxelles étant définie par la coexistence de deux langues, vont tour à tour imposer, avec une évidence de plus en plus forte, les réalités politiques et institutionnelles d’un État divisé linguistiquement autant que culturellement.”

13. Denis and Klinkenberg, *La littérature belge*, 33.
14. Durand and Habrand, *Histoire de l'édition*, 187.
15. *Ibid.*, 217–218.
16. Publishing companies Dupuis, Casterman and Gordinne are central in this phase. See Durand and Habrand, *Histoire de l'édition*, 189–211.
17. Simons, *Geschiedenis*, 7.
18. *Ibid.*, 9.
19. Ludo Simons, *Het boek in Vlaanderen sinds 1800. Een cultuurgeschiedenis* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2013), 440.
20. Simons, *Geschiedenis*, 57.
21. *Ibid.*, 182–184.

## Chapter 3

# Popular Belgian women's magazines with photonovels

This chapter is dedicated to the analysis of Belgian magazines, specifically focusing on women's magazines. As the 'containers' of photonovels, these magazines were far from neutral ground and all had their own agendas and a specific role to play. Analyzing women's weeklies – their functions, roles and importance – works toward the aim of providing an as far as possible complete material and cultural history of the photonovel in Belgium. Women's magazines form the very ground photonovels existed in. In light of this, an extensive discussion of the Belgian women's magazines that contained photonovels is provided. These magazines and photonovels could not have existed without the creative effort of many people; authors, photographers, editors and actors are also mentioned where relevant and contribute to creating the complex and intertwined context of photonovels as a print phenomenon.

Categorized as pulp, popular magazines thrived in the postwar period and experienced success for a few decades.<sup>1</sup> In addition to newspapers, many different kinds of popular periodicals were produced and sold at newsstands: informative magazines, women's weeklies, family magazines, serialized novels and youth magazines were some of the most popular. These magazines were usually cheap and targeted at all kinds of audiences, guaranteeing a large spread and reach.

In Belgium photonovels were generally printed in women's magazines, which were published weekly. Women's magazines could be produced commercially by big publishing companies, or have a smaller scale such as the militant magazines created by Catholic or communist associations or the ones published by feminist collectives in the 1960s.<sup>2</sup> With some exceptions, especially in Italy,<sup>3</sup> photonovels in Belgium were published in commercially produced magazines. The earliest photonovel published in a Belgian magazine dates to 1954. With a slight delay in publication in comparison to Italy and France, the photonovels produced and/or published in Belgium follow the model of those countries, albeit smaller

in scale and with some distinctions. Between 1954 and 1985 more than 600 photonovels were published in Belgian women's magazines. During this timespan, the role and function of the weeklies evolved, with direct consequences for the photonovels they contained.

Historically, magazines and periodicals played an essential role in reporting and interpreting an ever-changing world. This was in virtue of their production process that, in light of many technical advancements in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, allowed for a faster and cheaper production in comparison to that of books.<sup>4</sup> Images, for example, required long processing times that did not allow their daily publication in newspapers, but favored the periodical appearance of magazines; their distribution also contributed to the diffusion of consumer dreams and to the unification of these consumers' desires.<sup>5</sup> If literary and art magazines participated in the "constitution, dissemination, and consolidation of esthetic principles as organs promoting innovations or defending tradition, or anything in between",<sup>6</sup> a similar function was fulfilled by popular magazines, particularly so by women's weeklies. As Blandin puts it:

*The study of magazines linked to the appearance of new cultural practices is essential to understanding the evolution of the representations at work within a generation, and the methods of their dissemination by the cultural industries. In their diversity, the magazines of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century indeed offer a unique panoptic vision of the emergence and dissemination of cultural productions.<sup>7</sup>*

The weeklies that flooded the publishing market in the late 1940s and early 1950s were meant to provide women with an intimate space of dialogue, where the changes of the time could be, on the one hand, framed and brought back to a sense of normalcy, and, on the other hand, left aside for a moment of relaxed reading.<sup>8</sup> The function and format of these magazines became more and more defined throughout the 1950s in subtly redefining and clarifying the role of women, while at the same time entertaining them. Sullerot, writing in 1966 about women's press in the midst of its success and popularity, loosely defined women's magazines as those periodicals that explicitly framed themselves as targeting a female audience and as being designed for the female public.<sup>9</sup> More specifically, these magazines tailored and steered the real or perceived needs, interests and tastes of women.<sup>10</sup> Their function was carefully constructed as that of a confidant and an adviser, an adventure buddy and a moral censor. In 1962, the editor-in-chief of the magazine *Het Rijk der Vrouw* described as follows the task of what she calls a "modern women's magazine":

*A women's magazine only makes sense when it continues fulfilling its own task, and that task focuses on a pleasant and entertaining dialogue with the woman herself. In such a magazine the woman should be able to find a place for needs and dreams, wishes and tips that can serve her in her daily life. That is why such a magazine must have a moral standing that doesn't*

*turn the world of women into an unapproachable dream-world of the woman. It must be realistic and carefully fulfil its role in dealing with the many problems surrounding women's lives in our days, but it must not become a know-it-all that wants to resolve all problems.*<sup>11</sup>

As a result of their wide distribution and accessibility, women's magazines were very influential. They were one of the few sources women could get access to in order to find not only recreation and distraction in their spare time, but also information and answers to common troubles and concerns.<sup>12</sup> Essential for this latter function was the identification of the magazine as "an individual mentor in the mind of the reader, a source of support and problem solving."<sup>13</sup> Women's magazines were a window to the world, but they were far from neutral. They had the fundamental role of being mediators between their readers and society and, perceived as trusted friends, they could count on a rather uncritical reading of the framed and interpreted information they offered to the readers.<sup>14</sup> As such, they became vectors of stereotypes.<sup>15</sup> As mirrors of society, women's magazines could adapt themselves when changes happened and continue to provide an updated (and framed) view of the world. We see this happening in Belgian women's weeklies in the late 1960s, in conjunction with emancipatory movements and the second wave of feminism. While some embraced these changes, others reinforced their conservative stance. Tavernier talks about the "normative" influence of these magazines: comments and remarks, often conservative, about societal issues such as divorce, abortion, domestic violence, changing roles and any other aspect of life that touched women directly or indirectly were very present in the magazines; however, the norm was established not only via articles or columns dedicated to these topics, but as interspersed and scattered on almost every page of the magazines.<sup>16</sup>

Although it is true that women's magazines generally tended to resemble each other in form and content (and were often despised because of their homogeneous, cheap popularity), in 1968, Albert interestingly noticed and pointed out the magazines' differences instead of their similarities. More than variations in target audience (women from a middle- or working-class background) or in the layout and presentation (more or less elaborate and luxurious), the magazines' main difference, according to Albert, lay in the image of the ideal woman the magazines presented to their readers: the perfect housewife, the flirtatious and stylish woman or the working and independent one? Undoubtedly, particularly coinciding with the end of the 1960s and the second wave of women's emancipation, many magazines updated their offer and views of the world, while others remained more conservative. The magazine *Madame*, for example, opted for a transformation, mild as it was, first replacing the title *Entre-Nous* with the more fashionable *Madame*, then detailing the depth of its change:

*To greet 1966, Madame wishes to do more: to offer to all those who have loyally followed the magazine until now something pleasant, useful and pretty. This present is our new magazine.*

[...] *With a more enjoyable layout, we want to inform you each month of the many problems typical of all women: healthy nutrition, work, health, children's education, housekeeping.*<sup>17</sup>

The editorial discourse of the magazines that did transform with their times moved from the domestic horizon of home and children to an array of concerns more specifically linked to women's individuality.<sup>18</sup> This did not mean necessarily abandoning the domestic issues; apposing them to the 'new' issues would suffice, as shown by the items listed in *Madame* where the domestic dimension is pushed to the bottom of the list in favor of leaving a more prominent place to the new additions. As mentioned in *Madame* with its "more enjoyable layout", the reshaping of these magazines not only dealt with content, but was also mirrored by a restyling of the layout and pages, and in some cases it impacted the photonovels in the magazines as well. To open up to an even broader audience and to engage women in the rising issues related to morals and public health, some women's magazines moved from one segment of women's press to another, and adjusted their content and form. While maintaining their normative function, they introduced a more emancipatory stance.<sup>19</sup> This contributed strongly to sketching, as Marielle Macé puts it, a new lifestyle – a lifestyle that did not always match the one portrayed in photonovels, and that led to changes that could range from innovation to the complete disappearance of the stories altogether.<sup>20</sup>

With the rising popularity of television, women's weeklies of the 1970s faced strong competition and once again underwent a shift. In some cases, the weeklies' role of advisers and mediators was made more prominent as television took up most of the recreational function of the magazines. This was facilitated by their weekly publication, which allowed for the creation of a reference frame that could be rather elaborate and detailed.<sup>21</sup> In many other cases, however, magazines lost their importance and became subordinate to television. Undoubtedly television posed a threat to print matter that often led to bankruptcy and the end of publications. Having to reinvent their offer in order to stay alive, photonovels often fell victim to budget cuts and editorial reshaping, and gradually disappeared from all Belgian publications.

What follows is an overview and analysis of the Belgian magazines that published photonovels between 1954 and 1985.<sup>22</sup> This is an absolute original as such a list has never been compiled before for Belgian photonovels and provides an encompassing overview of the Belgian photonovel production. Moreover, it brings together a variety of magazines that have never been analyzed together nor comparatively. This both because of a perceived lowness of the material and a general lack of academic study, and also because of a tendency to linguistically split the study of Belgian literature and publishing history.

A brief history and evolution of the magazine is then given for each one, together with a mention of the target audience, the publisher(s), and bankruptcy or other instances that led to the sale of the magazine to other publishing companies. This because the historical and economic evolution of the magazine could impact directly its contents

and, more specifically, its photonovels. For each magazine the number of photonovels it contains, the start and end dates of the publication thereof, and recurring authors, scenarists, photographers and/or actors of the photonovels are then specified.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, aspects that characterize the presence of photonovels in a specific magazine are highlighted, such as the differences between translations or the preferred subgenres of the stories. The elements of the production here presented are mainly quantitative, except when the production itself presents aspects that distinguish it from the conventional photonovel; in these cases, the specialty, originality or distinguishing characteristics of the photonovels are highlighted and discussed more in depth. The list is organized by chronological order of publication of photonovels in the magazines. When a magazine had both netherlandophone and francophone outputs with different start dates of the photonovels, the magazines are nonetheless analyzed together. Their place in the list is based on the earliest-dated photonovels to be found between the two magazines. Once again, the photonovels under scrutiny are the so-called 'traditional' ones as defined in Chapter 1.1: photonovels published in popular women's weeklies, generally sentimental, pertaining to the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and, in some cases, 1980s, presenting a specific form of storytelling and photography. Therefore the list does not include parodic, humoristic, erotic, educational or artistic magazines that might have published photonovels.<sup>24</sup>

The bilingualism that characterizes Belgian literature in general plays a role in this context as well. We find francophone magazines next to netherlandophone ones. Rather than running in parallel, however, many of the magazines that included photonovels had a francophone or netherlandophone counterpart in order to reach the whole of the Belgian audience, and not just a part of it. This impacted the contents of the magazines, the photonovels and the translations differently, each magazine dealing with it in its own fashion. The choice to have both francophone and netherlandophone outputs was often economic and justified by the popularity of the magazine and aims of the publishing company. The fact that some magazines did not have a netherlandophone or francophone sister might be explained by a smaller-scale publication or a shorter life of the magazine, which did not allow for a venture in another language. The specificity of the contents was also a relevant aspect as it might not easily translate for a different audience.

Table 1 gathers a schematic description of the magazines containing photonovels listed below, following the order established in the text. The magazines that exist both in French and in Dutch are highlighted in the same color. Note that *Panorama* and *Rosita* had both respectively a netherlandophone and a francophone version, but these were virtually exactly the same magazine and are therefore treated as one in the table below. The aim of this table is to provide an easily accessible overview of the Belgian magazines that published photonovels together with the amount and the publication dates of the photonovels in each magazine. A complete list detailing the titles of all the photonovels published in Belgian magazines organized by magazine and publishing dates can be found in the Appendix.



Magazine	Publisher	Start publication	End publication	Start photo-novels	End photonovels	Total amount of photonovels
<i>Lectures d'Aujourd'hui</i>	s.a. Femmes d'Aujourd'hui	sep/52	27/08/1966	7/08/1954	27/08/1966	69
<i>Lectuur voor Allen</i>	n. v. Rijk der Vrouw	sep/52	29/12/1956	7/08/1954	29/12/1956	9
<i>Mon Copain</i>	Sparta (later Magnet Magazines)	1927	2/10/1955	19/06/1955	2/10/1955	1
<i>Ons Volk</i>	s.v. Volksonwikkeling; n.v. De Standaard (1919); J. Hoste (1976)	7/09/1911	1984	30/06/1955	6/08/1976	83
<i>Chez Nous</i>	s.a. Mirax; J. Hoste (1976)	1952	1987	30/06/1955	6/08/1976	84
<i>Het Rijk der Vrouw</i>	n.v. Rijk der Vrouw (group J. Meuwissen); J. Hoste, Sparta and Brébart (1975); TUM (later Mediaxis) (1990)	1931, 1933 or 1934	1991 (merges with Libelle)	28/02/1957	13/08/1985	102
<i>Femmes d'Aujourd'hui</i>	s.a. Femmes d'Aujourd'hui (group J. Meuwissen); J. Hoste, Sparta and Brébart (1975); TUM (later Mediaxis) (1990); Sanoma (2001); Roullarta (2018)	1933	Ongoing	24/03/1960	13/08/1985	92
<i>Bonnes Soirées</i>	Dupuis	2/04/1922	jan/88	4/08/1957	25/01/1970	37
<i>Mimosa</i>	Dupuis	6/05/1934	NA	4/08/1957	3/08/1969	30
<i>Piccolo</i>	Patria; Sparta (later Magnet Magazines)	1925	17/03/1963	8/05/1960	17/03/1963	12
<i>Tiptop</i>	Sparta (later Magnet Magazines)	24/03/1963	1/09/1963	24/03/1963	11/08/1963	1
<i>Vrouw en Huis</i>	De Vlijt	1947	dec/65	15/09/1960	7/02/1963	7
<i>Panorama (NL and FR)</i>	TUM (later Mediaxis)	1957	1998	19/09/1961	15/12/1964	10
<i>Rosita (NL and FR)</i>	TUM (later Mediaxis)	8/02/1952	1970 (merges with Libelle)	20/02/1962	28/06/1966	7
<i>Iris</i>	n.v. Orbis; TUM (later Mediaxis) (1973)	3/01/1959	1973 (merges with Panorama)	5/01/1963	22/12/1972	21
<i>Madame</i>	Entre-Nous asbl	1966	1969	jan/66	jul/68	2
<i>Joepie</i>	Sparta (later Magnet Magazines)	28/02/1973	jul/05	8/08/1973	26/02/2014	23

Table 1: List of Belgian magazines with photonovels.

### 3.1 *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* / *Lectuur voor Allen*

*Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* in French, *Lectuur voor Allen* in Dutch, is the first Belgian magazine that published photonovels. This is a sister magazine of *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* / *Het Rijk der Vrouw* and was published from September 1952<sup>25</sup> until December 29<sup>th</sup> 1956 in Dutch and August 27<sup>th</sup> 1966 in French. The francophone version of the magazine changed its name in *Modes et Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* on December 12<sup>th</sup> 1964, volume no. 641, in an attempt to better engage the female reader of the time. However, the board of the magazine reported a shift in readers' interests, particularly towards cars and television, that the magazine failed to match; therefore it was finally merged with *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* a year and a half later. The magazine focused mainly on fashion, but gave ample space to cooking and readings as well. It targeted middle-class housewives. According to the numbers reported by Veerle Peters, in 1964 it printed 54,895 issues per week to be distributed in Belgium.<sup>26</sup>

The first photonovel appeared in both the francophone and the netherlandophone magazines on August 7<sup>th</sup> 1954 (Figure 6). Nine photonovels have been published in *Lectuur voor Allen*, while there are sixty-nine in *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*. The comparison of the nine netherlandophone photonovels with the first nine francophone ones shows that eight of them are translations of the same photonovels, while only one of them, more precisely the eighth, presents a variation. On the one hand there is the photonovel *De Boevenprinses*, published in *Lectuur voor Allen* in twelve episodes from June 30<sup>th</sup> 1956 to September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1956. This was directed, according to the credits in the magazine, by E. Kiel. The name refers to Edith Kiel, one of the female movie directors in Belgium and a pioneer of Flemish cinema.<sup>27</sup> *De Boevenprinses* is in fact a movie directed by Edith Kiel in 1956, making its printed version in the magazine a film-photonovel.<sup>28</sup> The eighth photonovel in *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* is *Méditerranée* and ran over thirteen episodes from June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1956 until September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1956. This photonovel is advertised in the previous issue of the magazine (June 16<sup>th</sup> 1956) as a big novelty for two main reasons: not only was *Méditerranée* a popular operetta that had been playing at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris since December 17<sup>th</sup> 1955, but also the main singer of the operetta, the then extremely famous Tino Rossi, was to star as the main character of the photonovel. Adaptation and engagement of famous popular celebrities of the time were typical traits of photonovels, as will be explained in further detail in Chapter 4.1.

As the publication of the two magazines stopped at different times, so the photonovels are published until different dates in the two outputs: in *Lectuur voor Allen* the last photonovel appears on December 29<sup>th</sup> 1956, while in *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* the publication of photonovels goes on for another ten years, until August 27<sup>th</sup> 1966. Both dates coincide with the end of the publication of the magazine. It is worth noticing that the last photonovel of *Lectuur voor Allen* is cut off on episode sixteen as the magazine stops being published, and it is therefore not concluded. The entire story can be found in *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*, where



Figure 6: The first page of the first photonovel published in Belgium (francophone version) in *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*, August 7<sup>th</sup> 1954.

the photonovel, which starts at the same time as the one in *Lectuur voor Allen*, continues to be published (in French) under the title “La promesse du passé” and reaches a total of twenty-one episodes. In a similar fashion, in the last issue of *Lectures d’Aujourd’hui* only one photonovel is properly concluded (“Katia”), while the other two photonovels are left unfinished: “Tropiques”, the publication of which had started on July 30<sup>th</sup> 1966, and “L’oiseau dans la cheminée”, first published on August 13<sup>th</sup> 1966. The credits define both productions as photonovels of *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui*; indeed, in both cases they can be found in their entirety in *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui*, published respectively from June 9<sup>th</sup> 1966 until September 28<sup>th</sup> 1966 and from June 16<sup>th</sup> 1966 until October 26<sup>th</sup> 1966, and in translation in *Het Rijk der Vrouw*, on the same dates, published as “De Tropen” and “De vogel in de schoorsteen”.

If we analyze the credits of the photonovels, when present, we notice that the vast majority of them were directed by Bernard Keller – eight out of nine photonovels in *Lectuur voor Allen* and thirty-two out of sixty-nine in *Lectures d’Aujourd’hui* – a Frenchman working for the magazine as editor and columnist, alongside his role as photonovel author. In the 1950s, the photographs for Keller’s photonovels were mainly shot by French photographer, cameraman and cinematographer Jean-Paul Alphen. However, the photographer who worked the most with Bernard Keller was Georges Papo, active particularly in the 1960s as photographer of photonovels, portraitist of artists such as Louis Toffoli, and on (short) movie sets for film stills. What is remarkable is the cast that starred in photonovels, especially in the 1950s: French actors and actresses such as Marie-José Nat, Gil Vidal, Alexandre Rignault, Fabienne, Claire Olivier and Jean-Claude Pascal; French singers Line Renaud, André Claveau and Tino Rossi; Miss France 1953 Sylviane Carpentier; and even aviator Jacqueline Auriol, who starred in the photonovel “Pilote d’essai / Proefpiloot”. Though published in Belgium and produced by *Lectures d’Aujourd’hui* / *Lectuur voor Allen*, the presence of such a large number of French renowned personalities clarifies that these photonovels were created in France, where *Lectures d’Aujourd’hui* was distributed as well. It is however safe to reason that these celebrities were well-known in Belgium as well. On the close-knit photonovel and magazine exchanges between Belgium and France, please refer to Chapter 5.

### 3.2 *Mon Copain*

The weekly *Mon Copain* first appeared in 1927. It was published by Sparta, later called Magnet Magazines, a publishing house owned by Cyriel Van Thylo that in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was active in the publication of (women’s) weeklies, some with photonovels, as we will see.

The magazine was dedicated to “la bonne humeur”, with its love stories, movie stars, pin-ups and articles on films. Since the mid-1950s, it published serialized drawn-novels of a rather low quality.<sup>29</sup> Only on June 19<sup>th</sup> 1955 were drawn-novels replaced by an uncredited

photonovel titled “Aventure à Buenos Aires”, published in sixteen episodes. This photonovel was presented in the magazine as a “roman dessiné”, which shows that the editors did not (yet) make a distinction between photonovels and drawn-novels. Similarly to the photonovels that would start being published two weeks later in *Chez Nous / Ons Volk*, the photonovel had been distributed by A.L.I. productions, one of the agencies that bought and/or produced materials to sell to magazines in these years. Instead of being the first of many, *Mon Copain*'s photonovel was destined to remain the only photonovel of the magazine: the weekly suddenly disappeared from the market on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1955.

### 3.3 *Chez Nous / Ons Volk*

The magazine *Ons Volk* appeared for the first time on September 7<sup>th</sup> 1911 under the name *Ons Volk Ontwaakt*, as the popular counterpart to the intellectual-oriented weekly *Hooger leven*. It was managed by Alfons van de Perre and Arnold Hendrix, and the editor-in-chief was first writer Ernest Claes and then journalist Alfons Martens until World War II. It was initially published by s.v. Volksonwikkeling, founded in the same year by Alfons van de Perre and Arnold Hendrix. In 1919, after a break in the publication during World War I, the magazine started to be published again by n.v. De Standaard, which had taken over s.v. Volksonwikkeling.<sup>30</sup> In 1932, the name was shortened to *Ons Volk*, and *Ontwaakt* was kept as subtitle until 1937, when it eventually disappeared. This change in the name seems to stem from an evolution of the magazine itself, which lost some of its political and Catholic tendencies and became more and more a family magazine. The publication of the magazine stopped again during World War II and was picked up right after by another publishing company, De Nieuwe Standaard, which held it only for a couple of years. In 1947 in fact the publication was once more in the hands of De Standaard. The editor-in-chief at the time was Pol Heynes, who remained in charge from 1945 until 1960.<sup>31</sup>

An important moment for the current analysis in the history of this magazine is the year 1952, when a francophone sister magazine was created, *Chez Nous*, testifying to the importance and success of the magazine to the point of wanting to reach out to a broader, francophone, audience. The editor-in-chief of this new magazine was Jacques Van Melkebeke<sup>32</sup> and it was published by s.a. Mirax, a publishing company subordinate to De Standaard, of which it managed the francophone editions.<sup>33</sup>

*Ons Volk* and *Chez Nous*, both categorized as family magazines, evolved in time into women's magazines, targeted especially at women from the working class, with many articles on health, fashion, needlework, housekeeping and cooking, alongside sections dedicated to readers' letters and romantic readings in the form of photonovels, serial novels and short stories. This is also shown by the subtitle of *Ons Volk*, which from “Weekly magazine for the family” became “Weekly magazine for the Woman and the Family”.<sup>34</sup>

Photonovels in both *Ons Volk* and *Chez Nous* appeared on June 30<sup>th</sup> 1955 and were published until August 6<sup>th</sup> 1976. The reason for this cessation is to be found in the bankruptcy of the publishing company De Standaard in June 1976.<sup>35</sup> The publishing rights of *Ons Volk* and *Chez Nous* then passed on to J. Hoste, which at that time also published *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw*.<sup>36</sup> From that moment on, the magazines become a twin copy of sorts of *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw*, until their publication stops completely in 1984 for *Ons Volk* and 1987 for *Chez Nous*, due to a lack of sales of the magazines, which is recorded in the reports of the board of the magazines as early as 1978.<sup>37</sup> By 1983 the possibility of merging *Ons Volk* with *Het Rijk der Vrouw* is discussed,<sup>38</sup> but in May of the same year the decision to cease the production of *Ons Volk* is taken: "Ons Volk: Keeps declining. This publication will be stopped. The date is not yet scheduled. Efforts will be made to bring the readers of *Ons Volk* over to *Het Rijk der Vrouw*."<sup>39</sup>

As its twin copy, *Ons Volk / Chez Nous* faithfully reproduces the photonovels that were published in *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw*. Starting from August 13<sup>th</sup> 1976 in fact, a week after the last original issue of *Ons Volk / Chez Nous*, the photonovel "Lente in Finland / Printemps finlandais", which had launched on August 11<sup>th</sup> 1976 in *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw*, is taken up in *Ons Volk / Chez Nous* without a break.

The total amount of photonovels published in *Ons Volk* is eighty-three, while in *Chez Nous* it is eighty-four. While the start and end dates of the photonovels in the two magazines always corresponded, page numbering could largely differ, showing a difference in content in the netherlandophone and francophone issues. The magazines mainly published one photonovel at a time – one episode each week – except in some specific yet sporadic instances, namely: when a new photonovel began, the pilot of the photonovel is often to be found in the same issue as where the previous photonovel ended; or the beginning of a new photonovel did not coincide with the end of another and therefore few episodes ran parallel to each other in a limited number of issues. A remarkable example of this scheme can be seen in *Chez Nous*, from July 24<sup>th</sup> 1958 until November 13<sup>th</sup> 1958. During this timespan, the magazine offered two photonovels running in parallel: in addition to the photonovels "Lumière sur les cœurs" (May 15<sup>th</sup> 1958 – October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1958) and "L'obsession du passé" (October 9<sup>th</sup> 1958 – January 8<sup>th</sup> 1959), there appeared the photonovel "Loin des studios". This is an interesting and unique example because "Loin des studios" is also the only photonovel in the history of *Chez Nous / Ons Volk* that does not have a netherlandophone counterpart and was therefore never published in *Ons Volk*.

The large majority of the photonovels published in *Chez Nous / Ons Volk* are uncredited. In some cases, however, a closer look at the photonovels allowed us to distinguish a few photonovels certainly made in Belgium, either thanks to the rare credits, which refer to Belgian producers, or due to the presence of recognizable Belgian landmarks. This is the case for example for the photonovel "Maar het hart vergeet nooit / Pourtant le cœur n'oublie pas" (August 8<sup>th</sup> 1957 – December 19<sup>th</sup> 1957), where Brussels' Grande Place (Fig-



**Figure 7:** Episode 9 of the photonovel “Maar het hart vergeet nooit” is largely shot at the Grande Place in Brussels. *Ons Volk*, October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1957.

ure 7), City Hall, Palace of Justice and Manneke Pis can be identified. Conversely, this also allows us to recognize imported photonovels from Italy and France, such as “Le manoir de la folie / Het kasteel der gekken” (December 26<sup>th</sup> 1957 – May 8<sup>th</sup> 1958) with its French license plates and gendarmes. Many of the photonovels published between 1970 and 1973 were created by Richard Olivier and Gérald Frydman, both renowned Belgian figures in the media world. This was confirmed during an interview with Olivier himself.<sup>40</sup> In 1973 and 1974 three photonovels were authored by Raymond Cauchetier, a renowned French photographer active on film sets of the Nouvelle Vague. His name will come back either as author or photographer of photonovels in the magazines *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui* / *Het Rijk der Vrouw* and *Bonnes Soirées* / *Mimosa*.

### 3.4 Femmes d’Aujourd’hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw

Sources disagree on the birth of the magazine *Het Rijk der Vrouw*. According to the National Library of the Netherlands, the magazine was founded in 1924<sup>41</sup> and was published for the first time in 1925<sup>42</sup> under the title *Het Modeblad*.<sup>43</sup> As the title suggests, the magazine was initially mainly dedicated to fashion for women and girls. In only 1931 it underwent a renovation and changed its title in *Het Rijk der Vrouw*.<sup>44</sup> Other sources record the foun-

dation of the magazine as being in 1933<sup>45</sup> or 1934, as a companion publication to *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*.<sup>46</sup> Whatever the circumstances of its foundation, during the 1930s *Het Rijk der Vrouw* became one of the first Belgian magazines that framed itself as a magazine where women could find, for a little while, a moment of relaxation and an escape from their daily boredom and fatigue.<sup>47</sup> Specifically targeting women mainly from the middle class, *Het Rijk der Vrouw* offered articles on home decoration, beauty, health and childcare, recipes with photographs, sewing patterns and fashion tips, and romantic readings.<sup>48</sup>

The francophone counterpart to *Het Rijk der Vrouw*, *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*, was established in 1933 by entrepreneur Jan Meuwissen.<sup>49</sup> The editor-in-chief of the magazine was Rosita Verbeeck, an important figure for the magazine as she was the one who decided on its name and who, in fact, set the tone and format of the weekly.<sup>50</sup> Similarly to the netherlandophone magazine, *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* was promoted as a sort of counselor and friend for women, where they could find leisure as well as help in their everyday life in the form of legal counseling, recipes, tips for needlework and housekeeping, and so on.<sup>51</sup>

Although the themes and objectives were similar, *Het Rijk der Vrouw* and *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* never became exact, translated copies of each other. However, this does not hold for most of the photonovels. *Het Rijk der Vrouw* published a total of 102 photonovels, the first one dating to February 28<sup>th</sup> 1957 (no. 617) and titled "Liefste Annick...". The first photonovel in *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* appeared only in 1960 ("Les chevaux du diable", March 24<sup>th</sup> 1960, no. 777) and the total number of photonovels published amounts to ninety-two. The first twelve photonovels published in *Het Rijk der Vrouw* are translations of photonovels published in *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* just a few weeks earlier. Keeping in mind that *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* and its netherlandophone sister *Lectuur voor Allen* were offshoot magazines of *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* / *Het Rijk der Vrouw*, if we consider that *Lectuur voor Allen* had stopped its publication at the end of 1956, we can infer that its role was taken up by *Het Rijk der Vrouw* for a few years. While *Lectuur voor Allen* possibly did not meet a large enough audience to sustain its publication alongside *Het Rijk der Vrouw*, the photonovels it published were important and relevant enough for the audience that they were inserted in *Het Rijk der Vrouw* only two months after the cessation of the magazine and more than three years before the first photonovels started appearing in *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*. This testifies to the editors' enthusiasm and willingness to publish photonovels and a solid and constant request for more stories by the readers of the magazine, which would also be a motivating factor in the production of photonovels up until the 1980s, as recalled by photonovel author Hubert Serra in his autobiography.<sup>52</sup>

After a staggered beginning, the photonovels of *Het Rijk der Vrouw* and *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* then align and become exact translations of the same stories. Almost the entirety of these photonovels is directed by the same person, Hubert Serra. Out of the 102 photonovels in *Het Rijk der Vrouw*, Hubert Serra directed eighty-five of them, while he appears as the author of all ninety-two photonovels in *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*. Starting from Feb-



ruary 28<sup>th</sup> 1963 (no. 930) both magazines publish exclusively Serra's photonovels in both languages and with corresponding order and numbering. This goes on until August 13<sup>th</sup> 1985, when the last episode of the last photonovel is published and the production of photonovels for *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* and *Het Rijk der Vrouw* ends. Unlike the photonovels one finds in other magazines, the works published in *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* and *Het Rijk der Vrouw*, and certainly those produced by Hubert Serra's team, are clear examples of an esthetically upgraded version of the genre, as visible in the use of color, the typical layout making room for a mix of smaller and larger pictures, the frequent adaptation of literary works, the shooting on location, and the presence of many actors (including many extras).

*Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* and *Het Rijk der Vrouw* were published by s.a. Femmes d'Aujourd'hui and n.v. Het Rijk der Vrouw, owned initially by the publishing group J. Meuwissen. In 1975 they were acquired by the publishing company J. Hoste, together with Sparta (owned by the publishing group Van Thillo) and the Walloon businessman Maurice Brébart. In 1990, five years after stopping the production of photonovels, Van Thillo buys all the shares of J. Hoste and founds the multimedia company De Persgroep. The two magazines are however sold to Mediaxis (back then called Internationale Uitgevers Maatschappij and later Tijdschriften Uitgevers Maatschappij) and *Het Rijk der Vrouw*, bankrupted, merged with *Libelle*.<sup>53</sup> In 2001 Mediaxis sold *Libelle* and *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* to Sanoma, which in turn sold them to Roularta Media Group in 2018. Both titles still exist at the time of writing.

### 3.5 *Bonnes Soirées* / *Mimosa*

The first issue of *Bonnes Soirées* was published on April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1922 by Dupuis, which also published *Moustique* and *Spirou*, among many other publications. It stemmed from a clear vision that steered all of Jean Dupuis' work: to create a magazine at the service of a trusted and loyal audience, respectful of Catholic morality and feuilleton-based.<sup>54</sup> *Bonnes Soirées* was in its first years a magazine mainly dedicated to bringing sentimental literature closer to the masses; it in fact published novels in its entirety. After World War II, articles on practical subjects, sewing patterns, a section on fashion and advertisements started enriching the pages of the magazine.<sup>55</sup>

On May 6<sup>th</sup> 1934,<sup>56</sup> Dupuis launched *Bonnes Soirées*' sister magazine targeted at a Flemish audience: *Mimosa*. This sort of bilingualism was rare at the time, but Jean Dupuis, driven by his attention to the readership, showed a clear understanding of its needs and was aware of the economic benefits of targeting a larger and diverse audience.<sup>57</sup> Dupuis' company quickly increased in sales and popularity. *Mimosa*, together with the other netherlandophone production *HUMO*, was managed by Dupuis' Flemish son-in-law René Matthews.<sup>58</sup> It was initially titled *De Haardvriend* and, like *Bonnes Soirées*, mainly published romantic novels. Only

in later years<sup>59</sup> did it expand its offer and, following the example of its francophone counterpart, introduced articles on how to take care of the household, on fashion and health, on childcare, news stories, a section dedicated to readers' letters, recipes, sewing patterns, serial novels and a gossip feature. In 1957 the name *De Haardvriend* was changed in *Mimosa*.<sup>60</sup>

That same year, and more specifically on August 4<sup>th</sup> 1957, both magazines began publishing photonovels. The publication of photonovels stopped on August 3<sup>rd</sup> 1969 for *Mimosa* and on January 25<sup>th</sup> 1970 for *Bonnes Soirées*, and it seems to be ascribable to the second wave of feminism, which saw a complete revamp of the magazine in favor of a more activist stance and a leftist emancipatory attitude.<sup>61</sup> At first sight, the total number of photonovels published in *Bonnes Soirées* is 104, while in *Mimosa* it is ninety-nine. A closer look clarifies that many of the stories are actually film-photonovels (adaptations from real movies in photonovel format), but the magazines never truly make a distinction. 'Film-photonovel' and 'photonovel' are in fact used interchangeably and indiscriminately. The actual number of original photonovels is thirty-seven in *Bonnes Soirées* and thirty in *Mimosa*, the latter all Dutch translations of the francophone former. Remarkably and quite uniquely in comparison with the other bilingual magazines, the photonovels of these two magazines that have both a French and a Dutch translation often present differences in the layout, especially on the title page. This seems to indicate a certain independence and freedom of the editors of the two magazines and, conversely, a lack of unifying authorial vision. An exception to this can be found in the five photonovels directed by Jacques Van Melkebeke: "Was het een droom? / Etait-ce une illusion", "Sonate voor een verloren liefde / Sonate pour un amour brisé", "Als in een Spiegel / L'autre moi-même", "De erfenis van Paracelsus / L'héritage de Paracelse" and "En het noodlot zweeg / Le destin était muet". Here we can discern an authorial overall view, which kept the two versions in Dutch and in French exact copies of each other. The main theme of the photonovels was love, but at times it is possible to discern stories driven by courage, heroism and a sense of adventure.<sup>62</sup> The five photonovels by Van Melkebeke fall under this category. More than in love stories, he was in fact interested in adventure and investigation and therefore strived to create photonovels that could escape the usual romantic pattern.<sup>63</sup> In only half of the photonovels do we find mention of any credits. Among those credited are Ronan and Henri Caouissin, French brothers both active as editors and writers, and also authors of photonovels; Raymond Cauchetier, a French photographer known particularly for his work as a set photographer on films of the Nouvelle Vague, already mentioned as the author or photographer of photonovels in *Chez Nous / Ons Volk* and *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw*; J.J. Marine, the pen name of Belgian author René Charles Oppitz, who worked as a journalist for *Bonnes Soirées* and also wrote scenarios for photonovels; and Jean-Michel Charlier, a Belgian comics author and scenarist. The latter was already active within the company Dupuis as the scenarist of Buck Danny, published in *Spirou*, and was a provider of scenarios for the agency World Press.<sup>64</sup> Within Dupuis, he branched out to write a few scenarios for photonovels as well. The first one



Figure 8: First page of “Le remords d’une mère” in *Bonnes Soirées*, October 5<sup>th</sup> 1960. Note the credits mentioning Charlier as the author of the scenario as well as the presentation of the photostory as the “new sentimental and detective adventure of François Blain and Nicole Nadier” (© Dupuis).

we can attribute to Charlier with certainty is “Tête folle / Het dolle avontuur”, published in *Bonnes Soirées* in eighteen episodes from October 7<sup>th</sup> 1959 until February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1960 and in *Mimosa* in twenty episodes from October 21<sup>st</sup> 1959 until March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1960. The story, about both crime and love, follows detective François Blain and journalist Nadine Nattier. Uncommon in the world of photonovels, the couple makes a second appearance a few months later in a sequel photonovel titled “Le remords d’une mère / Het geheim van een moeder” (Figure 8), whose scenario is once again written by Charlier (from October 5<sup>th</sup> 1960 to February 1<sup>st</sup> 1961 in *Bonnes Soirées*, from November 23<sup>rd</sup> 1960 to March 29<sup>th</sup> 1961 in *Mimosa*).<sup>65</sup>

According to Peeters and Flour, *Mimosa* was less popular than its francophone sister, with an average published issues per week of 35,328. *Bonnes Soirées* reached about three times that amount, with an average of 102,864.<sup>66</sup> The target audience was composed of women from the working class. Peeters reports that *Mimosa* consisted of an average of ninety pages, with 17% dedicated to advertisement, 30% to illustrated material and 53% to text. This last number is noticeably high in comparison to other women's magazines of the time, but it can be explained if we consider that *Mimosa* still printed complete novels and serial novels in each issue.<sup>67</sup>

### 3.6 *Piccolo* and *Tiptop*

Information on the magazine *Piccolo* is vague at best. It first appeared in the 1920s<sup>68</sup> and was published until March 17<sup>th</sup> 1963, when it stopped rather abruptly. Its legacy was then taken up by the magazine *Tiptop*, which picked up where *Piccolo* left off for another twenty-four issues, after which its publication ended as well, on September 1<sup>st</sup> 1963. *Piccolo* was initially published by the publishing house Patria, which was bought in 1950 by Sparta. Sparta, owned by Cyriel van Thillo and renamed Magnet Magazines in 2002, was the publishing company that in 1975, together with J. Hoste and Maurice Brébart, bought *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw*, and that, in 1990, bought all the shares of J. Hoste, leading to the creation of the multimedia company De Persgroep.

*Piccolo* and *Tiptop* both targeted the middle-class woman. They presented a balanced mixture of features on a broad variety of subjects, ranging from music to cinema to gossip, serialized stories, answers to readers' letters, advertisements, and humor pages. The first photonovel was published in *Piccolo* no. 19, on May 8<sup>th</sup> 1960. For the occasion, the magazine's editor began her letter to the readers as such:

*“Destination Love”, said the photo editor, putting a large amount of sheets with photos before me and grinning. “Have a look and let me know what you think of it...”*  
*I began checking out the pages and reading, and before I knew it I was on the edge of my seat.*  
*That is because I am a shameless romantic and a photonovel on love, aviation and adventure*

*excites me greatly. Thus, starting from next week you will get to read it too because that's when we begin publishing "Destination Love" in Piccolo.*<sup>69</sup>

The tone is set for all the photonovels published in *Piccolo*, all of them extremely romantic stories and mainly of imported origin. *Piccolo* published a total of twelve photonovels, the last of which ended on March 17<sup>th</sup> 1963. The following week, on March 24<sup>th</sup> 1963, magazine *Tiptop* began and offered one photonovel titled "De Storm". These photonovels, although limited in number, present some interesting elements. The sixth photonovel of *Piccolo*, "Droombeeld", is uncredited; however, in the fifth episode we recognize Hubert Serra playing a minor role in the story. Serra was a director of photonovels and not an actor, and his presence in this uncredited photonovel seems to suggest that he directed it and had to step in as an actor, probably to make a cameo appearance or to fill in for the actual actor who was supposed to play that role, who had dropped out or turned out to be unavailable. The presence of one of Serra's works outside of *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw* should only partially surprise. It was common practice for the magazines to sell (and buy) their photonovels to agencies, which then proceeded to redistribute them to other magazines. Moreover, before being employed by the Belgian magazine, Serra had produced and directed photonovels for the French market, which were then distributed via agencies and could also surface on the Belgian market.

The eleventh photonovel of *Piccolo*, "Tween Parisiennes", features some minor credits. As the author of the photonovels we find G. Serra. G stands in this case for Geneviève, Hubert Serra's wife, who helped him in his work as a scenarist, mainly before Serra began working for *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw*. She is mentioned as the author of some of the photonovels produced by the French Editions des Remparts, for which Hubert Serra worked for a few years before moving to the Belgian magazine. Her role however, rather than that of author, remained mainly that of scenarist, while it was Hubert Serra who took care of the final layout. The photonovel published in *Piccolo* thus must have belonged to the photonovels Serra, with his wife's help, created before working for *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw*, and which then got sold and redistributed to other magazines via agencies.

The twelfth photonovel of *Piccolo* is titled "En het hart weifelt" and, upon closer inspection, it becomes apparent that it is a Dutch translation of the photonovel "Le portrait de l'autre", published in *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* between February 4<sup>th</sup> 1961 and June 10<sup>th</sup> 1961. This photonovel is one of the few that had never been translated into Dutch to be published in *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*'s netherlandophone sister, *Lectuur voor Allen*. While for "Le portrait de l'autre" we have credits concerning the producing crew (author Bernard Keller, scenarist Sonia Sandri, photographer Jean Cuyaux and assistant Philippe Laik) and it is recorded as a production of "Roman-photos de Lectuur d'Aujourd'hui",<sup>70</sup> "En het hart weifelt" only credits the actors. The production in this case is by Real Presse. This



**Figure 9:** On the left: a page of “Torrents”, in *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui*, August 18<sup>th</sup> 1960. On the right: a page of “De Storm” in *Tiptop*, March 24<sup>th</sup> 1963. Note how some of the images used are the same, but positioned, cropped and captioned differently (© Roularta).

was an agency that either bought or produced photostories and sold them to magazines. It is plausible to hypothesize that the photostory, published and no longer useful for the magazine, was then sold to one of the agencies such as Real Presse, surrendering all the rights and giving it authority to translate and sell it to other magazines.

The only photostory from *Tiptop* is perhaps the most interesting case. First of all, although the twenty-first episode ends with a “To be continued”, episode twenty-two would never see the light as the publication of the magazine suddenly ceased. Secondly, the credits list Hubert Serra as the author of the photostory, with photographer Raoul Coutard. Similarly to the case of “En het hart weifelt”, the photostory in question is a translation of one of the many photostories by Serra, in this case made for *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui*: “Torrents”, which appeared only in French in sixteen episodes from August 18<sup>th</sup> 1960 to December 1<sup>st</sup> 1960. However, rather than simply being a translation into Dutch of “Torrents”, “De Storm” features a completely different structure and layout, where the photos are placed in different spots, framed differently or entirely cut out of the story, and the texts are much longer (Figure 9). The credits concerning the production of “Torrents” clearly state that the photostory was a *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui* production, as for every photostory Serra directed for this magazine. However, the production of “De Storm” is

by Real Presse. In his autobiography, Serra recollects that, once a photonovel was ready to be published, all the sheets with photos and texts were given to the magazine and never seen again.<sup>71</sup> This means that Real Presse, rather than receiving the photonovel as a finished product, received all the preparatory material as well, free from copyright. This would allow the agency or the magazine editorial department to which Real Presse sold the material to do as they pleased with the texts and photos, remixing and segmenting the story, and creating new layouts and episodes as they saw fit.

### 3.7 *Vrouw en Huis*

The magazine *Vrouw en Huis* never had a francophone counterpart. According to Simons, the publishing house of this magazine, De Vlijt, was one of those that had fallen into Nazi hands during World War II and therefore had been strongly impacted by the ministerial decree of November 20<sup>th</sup> 1944, which punished collaborating publishing houses by banning them from publishing.<sup>72</sup> However, the website of Mediahuis, the current name of De Vlijt, never mentions an involvement during the war and, on the contrary, highlights how quickly De Vlijt resumed its publications after the conflict.<sup>73</sup> Given the impossibility of ascertaining the circumstances of those years, we can only confirm that in 1947 De Vlijt launched the magazine *De Vrouw*, which then changed name in *Vrouw en Huis* in 1948, placing it right at the heart of the flourishing period of new women's weeklies that targeted the 'modern woman', although, in the case of *Vrouw en Huis*, with a strong Catholic undertone.<sup>74</sup> The magazine in fact focused mainly on fashion and readings, with serialized stories and articles spanning from men's winter attire to readers' love troubles to faraway destinations. The photonovels of the magazine, with their blending of traditional sentimentalism and the excitement produced by the pursuit of happiness, are in sync with this tension between moral conservatism and openness towards modern consumerist culture. Among the publications of De Vlijt, *Vrouw en Huis* was its smallest, with an average of 80,000 issues published each week.<sup>75</sup> It was published until December 1965, when it then ceased to exist and merged with the magazine *Zie*, also published by De Vlijt.

The first photonovel of *Vrouw en Huis* appeared on September 15<sup>th</sup> 1960 and the magazine published photonovels up until February 7<sup>th</sup> 1963. In her study, Peeters claims that in these three years, sixteen photonovels were published. Strikingly, she does not make a distinction between what we consider without doubt a photonovel and what can be seen as a story with images. The latter consists of a juxtaposition of images and text, sometimes with dialogue, but more often descriptive. There are no speech balloons and the text never enters the space of the image, but remains in ordered blocks next to it. The ratio between text and images also differs from that of photonovels, since in these stories the text occupies a much larger space.

If we exclude the illustrated stories from the final count, *Vrouw en Huis* only published seven photonovels. As usual, not all of them featured credits. In the ones that did, we find some familiar names: the author of the second, third and seventh photonovels is Anne-Marie Berger, who had also directed a photonovel in *Bonnes Soirées / Mimosa*. Henri and Ronan Caouissin make an appearance as well as the authors of the fourth photonovel we find in the magazine.

### 3.8 *Panorama*

The magazine *Panorama* was launched in 1957 by the Tijdschriften Uitgevers Maatschappij. This company, formerly called Internationale Uitgevers Maatschappij and since 1997 known as Mediaxis, also owned *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw* between 1990 and 2001. The publication of *Panorama* stopped in 1998 after being deemed not profitable enough in comparison to the other magazines published by Mediaxis (such as *Libelle*, *HUMO* and *TVStory*).<sup>76</sup>

The magazine had both a francophone and a netherlandophone output, but they always remained exact copies of each other. The content was mainly connected with media, such as TV and cinema, featuring articles on both subjects and, later in time, providing readers with the schedule of programs to be aired on television (the only element that differed in the netherlandophone and francophone versions of *Panorama*), marking this as a family magazine, rather than a typical women's magazine of the time. It is nonetheless analyzed here because of the nature of its photonovels, which, although unusual, still fall under the category of traditional photonovels. The publication of photonovels began on September 19<sup>th</sup> 1961 and lasted until December 15<sup>th</sup> 1964, for a total of ten photonovels published. An unusual aspect of these photonovels is their subgenre: while the stories always feature a sentimental undertone, they are however framed as mystery or detective stories. This is plausibly a conscious choice of the redaction, in line with the general aim and audience of the magazine as a whole – which targeted not just the women of the household, but the family at large.

The week before the start of each photonovel, a page of the magazine is always dedicated to advertising it, having recourse to words such as “mystery”, “suspense”, “action” and “adventure” to describe the upcoming photonovel. In the feature at the beginning of *Panorama* on September 19<sup>th</sup> 1961, the redaction also dedicated a paragraph to introducing photonovels, the novelty that was to be found starting from the following issue: “a breathtaking detective story in words and images. As exciting as a movie”.<sup>77</sup>

The odd-numbered photonovels (one, three, five, seven and nine) present an unusual case. While photonovels usually last for just a few episodes, during which the narrative is developed and resolved, these photonovels follow the same character, the inspector Don Ferguson. He is introduced in the first photonovel, “De inspecteur neemt muziekles / L'inspecteur apprend la musique”, as an agent of Scotland Yard and the story revolves



**A PARTIR DE  
LA SEMAINE  
PROCHAINE**

## FERGUSON PRÉFÈRE LES ROSES

**NOTRE NOUVEAU  
ROMAN-PHOTOS**

Notre ami Ferguson en a assez de la pègre. Il a décidé de prendre définitivement sa retraite et de s'occuper uniquement de la culture des roses.  
„Les piqures de roses”, dit-il à juste titre, „sont moins douloureuses et surtout moins dangereuses que celles qu'on attrape à trop approcher les malfaiteurs. Et puis... elles sentent meilleur.”  
Mais notre bon Ferguson n'a pas droit à une complète tranquillité. De fait, voici que l'inspecteur Lloyd, de Scotland Yard, vient le relancer.  
Lloyd n'a cure de la culture des roses, ce qui l'inquiète, c'est la disparition soudaine et inexplicable de plusieurs évadés de prison. Plusieurs mandrins se sont en effet évadés des prisons de Belgique. Alors que généralement, même si on n'arrive pas à remettre la main dessus, les Autorités judiciaires parviennent généralement à savoir ce

qu'ils sont devenus, maintenant ils disparaissent et nul n'en entend plus jamais parler. Ferguson ne veut absolument pas quitter ses roses. Lloyd arrivera-t-il à le convaincre de l'aider?

Dès la semaine prochaine, suivez dans votre hebdomadaire favori, les nouvelles aventures de Ferguson, le meilleur des détectives

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Figure 10: Promotional page (francophone version) for the upcoming photonovel “Ferguson préfère les roses”, *Panorama*, March 17<sup>th</sup> 1964.

around a mystery to be solved. The following stories present additional mysteries that the inspector is called on to solve. The narratives of the individual photonovels are always resolved in the span of the story, but there is an overarching narrative that allows the readers to get to know the inspector better and follow him throughout the various cases he solves. The serialization of these photonovels is thus double: at the level of the individual photonovel, with episodes coming out weekly; and at the level of the overarching story, which is enriched by a new piece (that is, a new photonovel) every few months. The pages that advertise the upcoming photonovel contribute to creating a trusted character out of Don Ferguson, reminding readers of salient aspects of the mysteries solved in previous photonovels or aspects of the detective's life. For example, the third photonovel in this series (the fifth published in the magazine) ends with Don Ferguson taking his leave from Scotland Yard in order to retire to a quiet life in Belgium. The advertisement for the following photonovel picks up from where the previous one left off and informs the readers that, although Don Ferguson had sworn off his detective life, he did not have the time to get used to his retirement before suddenly being called back to help out in a new secret mission (Figure 10).

As the author of the first two of these photonovels the credits mention Pal Lukacs. Rather than the homonymous Hungarian actor, this was a Pole who worked for the agency Real Presse.<sup>78</sup> The other photonovels in this series were left anonymous and can be attributed to Jacques Van Melkebeke, who worked for Real Presse as well, based on stylistic elements and an interview with comics artist Jean-Pol, who worked with Van Melkebeke in the 1960s and mounted and lettered many of his photonovels.<sup>79</sup>

The second and the fourth photonovels are both authored by Hubert Serra and distributed by Real Presse. Among the many photonovels Serra directed, the two published in *Panorama* clearly belong to his less romantic and most thrilling ones, as immediately suggested by their titles “Afspraak met de dood / Invitation à la mort” and “In Extremis”, and neatly match the detective style of the Don Ferguson photonovels. Interestingly, Serra makes an appearance as an actor in both the fourth photonovel and the sixth (“Bye, bye, Mister Bird!”). Similarly to the case mentioned above in *Piccolo*, this leads us to believe that Hubert Serra directed the sixth photonovel as well, once again a story full of mystery and crime. A small yet striking detail of the photonovel “Afspraak met de dood / Invitation à la mort” is that the credited scenarist is Martin Illik. This is a well-known name for the readers of *Panorama*'s photonovels as he is the star actor of Jacques Van Melkebeke's photonovels, portraying the beloved Don Ferguson himself. It is plausible to think that we might once again be dealing with a manipulation such as the one we highlighted in *Tiptop*. *Panorama* acquired Serra's photonovels via the agency Real Presse; restyling this material in order to align it better with the overall detective style of *Panorama*'s photonovel would not have been a difficult feat. If we also remember that Van Melkebeke directed many of the photonovels produced by Real Presse,<sup>80</sup> we can infer that it would have been easy for

Van Melkebeke or someone close to him, such as Martin Illik, to not only have access to this material, but also have ties to the magazine and influence on the magazine's photonovels.

### 3.9 *Rosita*

On February 8<sup>th</sup> 1952 the first issue of *Rosita* is published under the title *Goed Nieuws voor de Vrouw* by the publishing company Tijdschriften Uitgevers Maatschappij (which published *Panorama* as well). Unlike most of the other women's weeklies of the time, *Rosita* was originally founded as a Flemish publication with a francophone counterpart derived from it. This was initially titled *Les Bonnes Nouvelles pour la Femme*. Both magazines acquired the subtitle *Rosita* in 1963. After only a year, *Rosita* became the title, with subtitles *Goed Nieuws voor de Vrouw* in Flanders and *Les Bonnes Nouvelles pour la Femme* in francophone Belgium. In 1966 the subtitle vanished, leaving *Rosita* as the only title of the magazine.<sup>81</sup> It was published until 1970, when it then merged with *Libelle*.

An important aspect that distinguished this magazine from its contemporary weeklies is that *Rosita* was available only with a subscription and was therefore not to be found on regular newsstands.<sup>82</sup> However, apart from this element, the magazine featured all the recurring characteristics of a women's magazine: articles on how to take care of the house and the children, tips for fashion, housekeeping, health and beauty, sewing patterns, a column dedicated to readers' letters, news on movies and music, and romantic readings. It was targeted at housewives and women from the middle class.<sup>83</sup>

The magazine published an average of 183,975 issues per week, counting its francophone and netherlandophone publications together.<sup>84</sup> Only seven photonovels appeared in *Rosita*, from February 20<sup>th</sup> 1962 (no. 8) to June 28<sup>th</sup> 1966 (no. 27). They were translated into both languages and published in the same order and with the same numbering. The photonovels feature no credits and are described by Peeters as simple, romantic stories with an assured happy ending, of a rather low quality in comparison with the rest of the magazine and "likely [...] of foreign provenance".<sup>85</sup> If it is true that the plots are shallow, further analysis has however led us in a different direction as far as the origin of these photonovels is concerned. Following Mouchart, we were able to attribute at least five, but likely all seven photonovels to Jacques Van Melkebeke,<sup>86</sup> which means that these photonovels are made by a Belgian. Most of them are a production of the agency Real Presse. The seventh photonovel of *Rosita* begins as a Real Presse production and ends as an I.F.S. production in 1966. The comics artist Jean-Pol confirmed that the company Real Presse split up and I.F.S. (International Feature Service) resulted from this division and picked up the work of Real Presse.<sup>87</sup> This split must have clearly happened in the months during which this photonovel was published, more specifically in June 1966, as the change in the production credits testifies.



Figure 11: Actress Marie-Christine Cabie in “Melodie uit het verleden” in *Rosita*, April 28<sup>th</sup> 1964.

On the occasion of the exhibition “Roman-Photo” at the Photography Museum in Charleroi (May 25<sup>th</sup> – September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2019), a letter was sent out through the press enquiring about people who had read photonovels and were willing to donate their old copies to the museum. One of the answers received by the museum and forwarded to us was written by a lady who had acted in photonovels, Marie-Christine Cabie. During our meeting with her at her home in Ghent, she recalled being contacted directly by Real Presse and hired to star in photonovels. Although the photonovels published in *Rosita* have no credits, she pointed her younger self out for us in the magazine, as an extra in the photonovel “Het geluk wacht in Portofino / Le bonheur attend à Portofino” and as the main actress of the photonovel “Melodie uit het verleden / La mélodie du passé” (Figure 11), both directed by Jacques Van Melkebeke. She also starred in “De Inspecteur en de ongrijpbaren / L’inspecteur chasse les courants d’air” in *Panorama* (November 13<sup>th</sup> 1962 – March 12<sup>th</sup> 1963), “Alors qu’il n’espérait plus” in *Lectures d’Aujourd’hui* (January 19<sup>th</sup> 1963 – May 4<sup>th</sup> 1963), and “Was het een droom? / Etait-ce une illusion?” in *Mimosa* (January 7<sup>th</sup> 1968 – March 31<sup>st</sup> 1968). All these photonovels are uncredited, but can be attributed to Jacques Van Melkebeke.

The first two photonovels of *Rosita* (“De regisseur van haar leven / Annie et son metteur en scène”<sup>88</sup> and “Het geluk wacht in Portofino / Le bonheur attend à Portofino”)<sup>89</sup> are both preceded by a page of advertisement announcing the upcoming story in the following issue. The first photonovel published in the magazine is not referred to as a photonovel, but as a “récit dessiné”.<sup>90</sup> As already mentioned above, this kind of uncertainty in the terminology was typical at the time and lasted a few years, blurring the line between drawn-novels, film-photonovels and actual photonovels. From the second story onwards, the term ‘photonovel’ starts appearing regularly, without further confusion.

### 3.10 *Ons Land met Iris*

*Iris* appeared for the first time on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1959 as a free supplement to the magazine *Ons Land*. It was, for all intents and purposes, a women’s weekly: it consisted of articles on housekeeping, childcare, beauty and health, provided information on the latest fashions and movies, and had recipes, short comics, a humor section and romantic stories. On January 5<sup>th</sup> 1963 it also started publishing photonovels. In December of the same year, it stopped being published as a separate annex and was integrated into the magazine, which changed title to *Ons Land met Iris*. This change had however no effect on the content of the magazine itself.<sup>91</sup>

Photonovels continued to be published until December 22<sup>nd</sup> 1972 and reached a total number of twenty-one. More than in any other weekly here described, the photonovels of *Ons Land met Iris* seem to lack unity and an overall strategy: they can occupy a variable number of pages per issue, from two to just one; they are sometimes printed full-page,



Figure 12: Episode 6 of the photostory "Achter de Schermen" in *Iris*, March 1<sup>st</sup> 1969. Note the layout: although the original episode is made of two pages, it is in this case printed vertically, so that it occupies only one page of the magazine.

other times in a smaller format and surrounded by other sorts of text; when printed on one page, they are often positioned vertically instead of following the general horizontal direction of the magazine (Figure 12); the look, layout and structure of each photonovel differs substantially. The overall impression is that most of these photonovels were translated from foreign originals, the rights for which were bought each time from different agencies. Most of them are marked as Real Presse or I.F.S. productions. While one other features credits indicating an Italian provenance,<sup>92</sup> the rest of them are uncredited. Between August 29<sup>th</sup> 1964 and May 8<sup>th</sup> 1965 and, once again, between June 26<sup>th</sup> 1966 and October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1966 no photonovels were published. This seems to yet again testify to an absence of attention and care for the photonovel section of the magazine.

The magazine *Ons Land* was first published in 1919 by J. Felix and then sold, in 1932, to the publishing company Altiora. During World War II, Germans took a liking to the magazine and its publication could continue, rather successfully, unlike many other similar weeklies.<sup>93</sup> After the conflict, the publication of the magazine was stopped because of its collaboration with the Nazis. Altiora, in an effort to distance itself from the sudden bad reputation of the weekly, sold it (or rather, gifted it) to the newly founded publishing house n.v. Orbis in 1946. In the same year, the magazine was able to resume its publication, which turned out to be a constant source of profit for Orbis.<sup>94</sup> In 1973, however, *Ons Land* was bought by Tijdschriften Uitgevers Maatschappij and merged with *Panorama*, which resulted in a change of title: *Panorama Ons Land*.

### 3.11 *Madame*

*Madame* was published by Entre-Nous asbl for less than four years, from 1966 to 1969. It was the successor of the magazine *Entre-Nous*, a publication of the Centre Coopératif de la Famille and, unlike all the other magazines listed here, it was published monthly. Under the name *Entre-Nous*, the magazine had a rather conservative stamp. It targeted housewives and offered recipes, articles and suggestions on how to take care of the household and of children, and serialized romantic novels. It went as far as providing a monthly schedule to better organize and manage the household. In 1965, we see the first signs of a change of focus of the magazine: the front page is modernized, fashion advice expands its reach beyond practical clothing for the house, and, in November, the magazine adds the subtitle *Madame*. Starting from the following issue, *Madame* becomes the title, marking the last step in the evolution of the magazine, now dedicated not only to the housewife, but also to the modern woman.

It is following this evolution, which also affected the graphic layout of the pages and involved an increased number of photographs, that photonovels make their appearance in the magazine. Only two of them were published, starting from January 1966 until

July 1968. The first photonovel, "Emilie d'Aurenche", is a short, uncredited story of classical photonovel romance, mirroring the more conservative aspirations of the magazine. The other photonovel, on the contrary, is a further step in transforming the magazine into something more glamorous and pop. Written by Richard Olivier, put together by Gérard Frydman and photographed by Jacques Jacob, its title "Imogène Jane" and is preceded by an introduction written by the redaction. That the redaction felt the need to introduce and almost justify the presence of this story says a lot about its originality.

### 3.12 *Joepie*

The magazine *Joepie* represents an unusual case in this list of weeklies. It is in fact a magazine that appeared later in time in comparison to the others analyzed here and had thus its roots in a different tradition: not that of the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century women's weekly, but rather in the international pop culture and music magazines more typical of the late 1960s and the 1970s that targeted a younger audience. It is nonetheless discussed here because of the specificity of its photonovels, which, at least at an earlier stage, presented the same coding and patterns of the traditional photonovels, though often imbued with a younger and more modern take.

*Joepie* was launched on February 28<sup>th</sup> 1973 by Sparta (later Magnet Magazines), the same company that owned *Piccolo* as well and that was the backbone of De Persgroep. The magazine was a joint effort of editor-in-chief Guido Van Liefferinge and entrepreneur Sylvain Tack. The latter was the owner of Suzy Wafels, the best-known and sold brand of packaged waffles in Belgium. In 1970, alongside his waffle business, Tack successfully entered the Flemish show business world by founding his own recording studio and launching the record label Start Records. His goal, according to Van Liefferinge, was to create a "Flemish show business empire".<sup>95</sup> Therefore, after his proposition to collaborate with *Hitorama*, the only music magazine that existed in Flanders at the time, was turned down by its owner Erik Marijsse, he helped Van Liefferinge found *Joepie* in order to create a platform for his artists to be promoted, his records sold and his waffles advertised. His next endeavor only solidified the closeness of his enterprises: Radio Mi Amigo, a pirate offshore radio that broadcast Tack's Start Records artists and went as far as reading out loud articles published in *Joepie*.

Falling within this intertwined reality, the first eight photonovels in *Joepie* were published from August 8<sup>th</sup> 1973 until November 28<sup>th</sup> 1976. This first wave of photonovels mirrored the typical aspects of the traditional photonovels of women's weeklies, portraying sentimental stories, but it introduced a new element. Influenced by the French tradition of photonovels starring pop music and TV stars from the early 1960s,<sup>96</sup> the main actors in these photonovels are singers, either already famous or just launched by Tack's Start



Records: Willy Sommers, Micha Mara, Paul Severs, Jimmy Frey, John Terra and Jo met de Banjo among others. The author of these photonovels was Penny Els, the pen name of Els Van den Abbeele, who not only worked in the redaction of *Joepie*, but also wrote many lyrics for artists such as Ann Christy, Jimmy Frey and John Terra. The photographer of the first three photonovels was Jean-Marie Blanckaert, brother of Will Tura. Other credited photographers were Louis-Philippe Breydel, Lou Demeyere and Marcel Van Landeghem, who all worked at the time as photographers for music bands and singers. All these names show that the whole of *Joepie*'s photonovel production crew consisted of people who were active in the music industry.

The weekly reports of the publishing board of *Joepie* signal at the beginning of the 1980s a steady decrease in sales of the magazine and, by the end of 1985, it was decided that the content of *Joepie*, which had become more and more a pop magazine that focused on celebrities, should be renewed. The editorial staff was to find a new focus and work more regionally.<sup>97</sup> The beginning of 1987 shows the first signs of this attempt. Not only were collectable stickers added to the magazine, but also a new wave of photonovels started on March 29<sup>th</sup> 1987 and lasted until August 28<sup>th</sup> 1988. In the 1980s many Belgian women's weeklies had already stopped the publication of photonovels, with only *Het Rijk der Vrouw* / *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* keeping it up until 1985. The popularity of the genre had in fact decreased throughout the 1970s and, while *Het Rijk der Vrouw* / *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* still published them in the first half of the 1980s, traditional photonovel makers were forced to face reality: the stories were not working any longer, they no longer interested or entertained the target audience of middle- and lower-class women, and their function and role had been taken up by other media. Therefore, the second wave of photonovels in *Joepie*, while maintaining the typical grid format with photographs, captions and text balloons, presented a shift in focus of the stories and a new target audience. Moving away from the celebrity world that had defined the first wave of *Joepie* photonovels and from the film-photonovels that had followed it, the new photonovels were more specifically targeted at teenagers and presented stories and characters more relatable for the young readers of the time. With titles such as "She really wanted to trust him" and "It's difficult when you are so shy",<sup>98</sup> these photonovels tackled problems, insecurities and typical situations teenagers had to face and, with what could be seen as a pedagogical undertone, portrayed possible ways to deal with these issues and find solutions. The photonovels are all uncredited, the actors arguably chosen from young Belgians in line with the attempt to target and engage a more local audience.

The third wave of photonovels in *Joepie* presented once again a change. It began on September 4<sup>th</sup> 1996 and lasted until February 26<sup>th</sup> 2014. The target audience was, similarly to second-wave photonovels, teenagers, but the stories were built upon a different, more current, model. Leaving behind the photonovel tradition of the 1950s, these stories shared much of the soap opera story-building, atmosphere and feel of the time, but were set in

high school instead of homes and offices. With rather shallow plots, the seven photonovels explored school and the love life of adolescents, culminating in a ten-year-long photonovel that reached its 500<sup>th</sup> episode and was left unfinished, showing that, once again, interest had shifted and giving a conclusion to the story was no longer a priority for a magazine, whose popularity was in decline. Indeed, the year after, by the end of 2015, the publication of *Joepie* came to an end. These photonovels were all left uncredited.

### 3.13 Other magazines

In addition to the magazines just analyzed, the Belgian publishing market offered in the same years a few variations on the theme. So we find, on the one hand, a few additional women's magazines that are entirely dedicated to the publication of photonovels, either in serialized fashion or as complete stories; and on the other hand, magazines not primarily targeted at women, with hybrid photonovels that push the boundary of what we call 'traditional'. I have decided to add these publications and discuss them, though briefly, in this context as they represent the reality of the time and help construct a clearer picture of the landscape in which photonovels were produced and published.

#### 3.13.1 *Roman Film complet, Sandra / Katia and Sérénade*

The three magazines discussed here were dedicated in their entirety to photonovels. This was a tendency typical of Italian or French photonovels, but in Belgium it only represented a minority. The photonovels published in these magazines were mainly translations of foreign works.

*Roman Film complet Chez Nous* was a bimonthly francophone magazine published by s.a. Mirax in Brussels, which also published *Chez Nous* and was managed by François Scohy, and UNIDE (Union Interfamiliale d'Éditions) in Paris. It was thus distributed not only in Belgium, but also in France, as part of the international expansion of the De Standaard group that started in the 1950s driven by the ambition of editor-in-chief and leading figure Albert De Smaele.<sup>99</sup> Although the Royal Library of Belgium does not hold the magazine in its entirety, if it consistently appeared bimonthly we should be able to date its first issue to September 5<sup>th</sup> 1958. The last copy held at the library shows that as of December 31<sup>st</sup> 1971 the magazine was still published. As the title suggests, the magazine published entire photonovels and film-photonovels, often of French or Italian origin and similar in style to the photonovels published in *Bonnes Soirées / Mimosa*. Sure enough, some of the credits mention photographer Raymond Cauchetier and the brothers Ronan and Henri Caouissin as authors or scenarists of photonovels, and also Jean-Michel Charlier. An interesting example of Charlier's contribution to the magazine's stories is the film-photonovel "Les Chevaliers du Ciel", published on September 20<sup>th</sup> 1968. Charlier took

care of the scenario and dialogue. The photographs were taken in this case not from a movie, but from the homonymous French television series that premiered on September 16<sup>th</sup> 1967. The TV series was, in turn, an adaptation of the comics series “Les Aventures de Tanguy et Laverdure”, which was created by Albert Uderzo and Jean-Michel Charlier himself. In other words, Charlier wrote the scenario and dialogue for a film-photonovel that was based on a TV series that was based on a comics series written by Charlier himself. This shows the intricate and intertwined relationships that existed in the media world of the time: not just transmedial crossings of content, but also of manpower.

The netherlandophone magazine *Sandra / Katia* was published weekly by the publishing house De Schorpioen starting from September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1967. According to the volumes held at the Royal Library of Belgium, the last issue was published on March 9<sup>th</sup> 1968. The first issue, as well as all the following uneven numbers, was titled *Sandra*, while the title of the even numbers was *Katia*. Although the title changed weekly, swapping from *Sandra* to *Katia*, there was only one difference between the two – and therefore they are treated as one magazine – namely, the first and last pages of the magazine: *Sandra* presented a feature titled “Amor tot uw dienst” (“Amor at your service”) where readers’ love troubles were answered, while *Katia*’s first and last pages offered a short romantic story. The subtitle, which was always the same, gives a clear indication of the content of the magazine: “Schorpioen – Fotoroman” (“Schorpioen – Photonovel”). This is in fact a magazine entirely dedicated to photonovels, preceded and followed, as mentioned above, by readers’ letters or a romantic story. Each issue featured a complete photonovel that consisted of forty-three pages. Details in the photonovels, such as posters, license plates and labels, show that the provenance of these photonovels was mainly Italian or French, making these translations of foreign works. While these photonovels never featured credits, they were nonetheless methodically advertised on the third cover, where both *Sandra*’s and *Katia*’s upcoming photonovels shared the page.

The last magazine in this list is *Sérénade*. Information on this magazine is vague and difficult to come by. It does not appear in any of the lists of women’s magazines consulted<sup>100</sup> and the Royal Library of Belgium only holds one copy of it. It is nevertheless included here in an attempt at thoroughness and with the hope that in the future more information can be gathered on this matter. The copy held at the Royal Library of Belgium is the second issue of, as stated in the magazine, a monthly publication of a new series, published by Les Éditions de l’Occident in Brussels, under the leadership of Belgian writer and publisher Louis Musin. The aim of this new series was to publish photonovels in their entirety – the copy consulted features a photonovel titled “L’ange gardien”, presumably of foreign origin – combined with a few articles and features on the celebrities of the time. The magazine was targeted not only at the francophone readers of Belgium, but also at the French audience. While missing a date, an article in the magazine brings news of the marriage of French actor Alain Delon to French model and actress Nathalie Barthélémy

on August 13<sup>th</sup> 1964, from which it is possible to infer that the magazine must have been published shortly after the event.

### 3.13.2 *HUMO* and *Sportif'68 / Sport '68*

The realm of women's weeklies was where photonovels thrived. Outside of it, we only find very few instances of photonovels, often either unsuccessful or playing within the sentimental genre, as we have seen for the photonovels published in *Panorama*. While those photonovels still featured the basic characteristics of traditional photonovels, though stretching its sentimentality thin in favor of a more investigative tone, the photonovels in *HUMO* and *Sportif'68 / Sport '68* take it a step further and cross into experimental territory.

Initially published by Dupuis, *HUMO* first appeared in 1934 under the title *HUMO-Radio* as a netherlandophone counterpart to *Le Moustique*, which had already been running since 1924.<sup>101</sup> Somewhere between its birth and 1993, likely around the 1980s, *HUMO* passed from Dupuis to the publishing company The Press, which sold it in 1993 to Tijdschriften Uitgevers Maatschappij, already mentioned above as the publishing company of *Panorama* and *Rosita*. In 2001 Tijdschriften Uitgevers Maatschappij sold some of its magazines to Sanoma, among which *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*, *Libelle* (which had merged with *Het Rijk der Vrouw*) and *HUMO*. De Persgroep bought *HUMO* in 2015 and still publishes it at the time of writing.

In its first years, *HUMO-Radio* provided readers with the schedule for radio programs, alongside articles ranging from current events to cookery to tourism, as well as serialized novels, comics and features focusing on celebrities. Starting from the late 1950s, it introduced a section on television as well and shortened its name to *HUMO*. Although retaining some of the traits of women's magazines, *HUMO* was profiled rather as a family magazine, similarly to *Panorama*. Photonovels in *HUMO* represent a brief phase in the history of the magazine and give the impression of an experiment that was deemed unsuccessful, or at least not profitable or interesting enough to be pursued. Note that the francophone sister of *HUMO*, *Le Moustique*, shared with *HUMO* the general structure and the advertisements, but not the specific content. The photonovels published in *HUMO* were therefore never translated and published in *Le Moustique*.<sup>102</sup>

There are only four photonovels to be found in *HUMO*, published between April 13<sup>th</sup> and July 6<sup>th</sup> 1967, and each consists of only two episodes of four pages each. They were published in the section called "ttt" which stood for "tienaers, toppers, treffers" (teenagers, best of, hits). The first two photonovels were created by Richard Olivier and Gerard Frydman, and the last two by Guy Mortier, who worked as a freelance journalist for the magazine and, two years later, became the editor-in-chief. The four photonovels present different forms of hybridization. First of all, the general narrative of traditional photonovels is not respected. Far from being sentimental, these stories bring together humor, parody and sketch elements. Not only is the sentimental genre disrupted, these photo-

novels also lack an overarching narrative, preferring a structure that is made out of many vignettes. The narrative they create is rather a juxtaposition of separate events and places, loosely bound together by text. Secondly, this narrative style mirrors the way the stories are put together, showing a style of photonovel production that deviates from the most traditional and common one: instead of working with a scenario and taking the photographs accordingly, photographs of possibly interesting subjects and scenes were taken, printed and only then placed on the page to form the story. The text was the last element to be thought of and was used as glue for the whole story, to bridge one or more images to the next. Thirdly, the texts are lettered creatively. While traditional photonovels usually only feature one simple, legible font used throughout the whole story or, at most, two different ones for captions and speech balloons, here the creators played with various fonts, even attributing specific ones to specific characters. Lastly, the two photonovels by Guy Mortier feature an added element, namely drawings. These not only decorate the title page, but can also be found as a frieze at the top of the page or interspersed throughout the story, as unusual frames of photographs, vignettes added to the story, characters filling the blank spaces of the page or illustrating the text. Although photonovels remained a short-term experiment of the spring of 1967, some of their spirited and pop stylistic elements would come back a few years later when Mortier became editor-in-chief of *HUMO* in 1969. This position allowed him in fact to introduce a playful touch to the magazine, which would become and remain a typical aspect of *HUMO*.

*Sportif '68 / Sport '68*, as the title suggests, was a weekly magazine dedicated to sport. Many articles accompanied by black and white photographs focused on just as many sports. It was first published in January 1967 as *Sport '67* in Flanders, followed in June by *Sportif '67* for francophone readers, and its publication ran until October 1986, when it merged with the monthly *Sport Magazine*. As a separate supplement of the newspaper *Het Laatste Nieuws*, it was published by the group J. Hoste, which, as we have seen, in the 1970s bought *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw* and *Chez Nous / Ons Volk*. While these women's weeklies produced and published photonovels all throughout the 1970s, in the late 1960s the publishing company Hoste had yet to own a magazine that featured photonovels.

Only one photonovel appeared in *Sportif '68 / Sport '68*, published in three episodes from May 26<sup>th</sup> to June 9<sup>th</sup> 1968. Its title is “Le roman-photo d'Eddy Merckx au Giro / De fotoroman van Eddy Merckx in de Giro”, presenting it, unsurprisingly considering the magazine that published it, as a sports story. The first episode is advertised in bold letters in the magazine as a novelty in the history of cycling. Although there existed photonovels that touched upon sport and even had sporting celebrities acting in them,<sup>103</sup> the one published in *Sportif '68 / Sport '68* is of a different kind. Readers acquainted with photonovels, after reading the title that defined the story a photonovel, might have been surprised upon reading the story itself. Indeed, according to the definition of traditional photonovel, this story can be considered at best as a hybridized photonovel, if not something

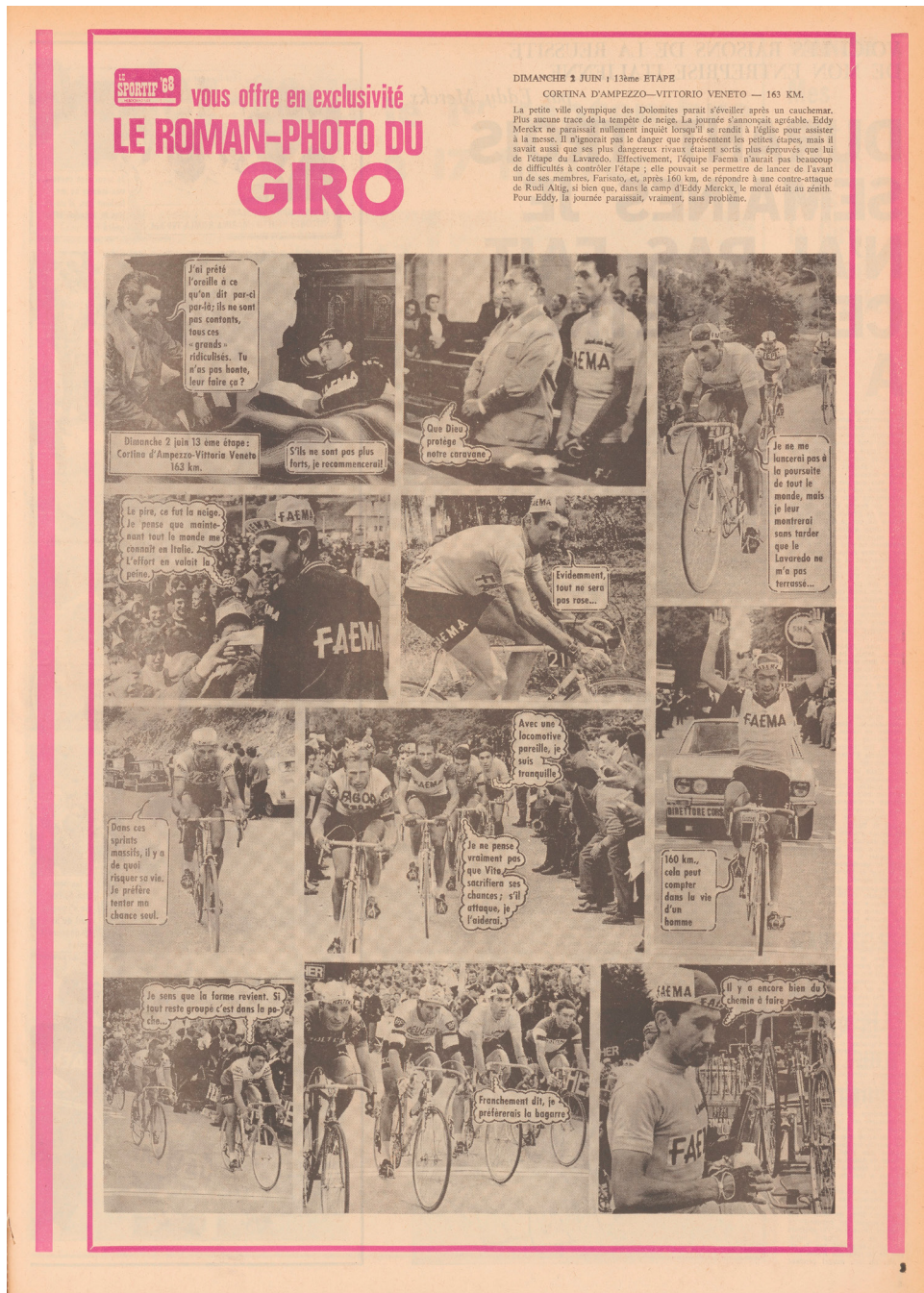


Figure 13: First page of episode 3 of “Le roman-photo d’Eddy Merckx au Giro” in *Sportif '68* / *Sport '68*, June 9<sup>th</sup> 1968. Note how the narrative is non-linear and artificially arranged through the text.

else completely. Aiming at illustrating cyclist Eddy Merckx's adventures at the Giro d'Italia cycling race, the so-called photonovel presents a photographic recounting of the happenings of the race, placing it very far from the defining fictionality and sentimentality of traditional photonovels (Figure 13). There is no unity to the story, which is instead a jumble of various facts concerning the Giro. Similarly to the creative production of the photonovels in *HUMO*, the story was constructed only after the photographs were taken, printed and laid out on the page. In other words, Eddy Merckx is not posing as an actor, but is simply doing his job and competing in the race. The photographs are just like the ones the magazine habitually published in its articles. They were in fact taken by Tony Strouken and Paul Coerten, the former a renowned sport photographer and the latter a photographer who would become known for his work in the rock music scene. The careful and intelligent layout of the photographs and the text to accompany them is what gives shape to what is more a photographic reportage and less a photonovel. Although the author credited for this work is Honoré Willems, Richard Olivier claimed authorship of this story during one of our interviews with him.<sup>104</sup> The style can indeed be traced back to other photonovel works by Olivier, already mentioned above and listed in Chapter 4.1.3.

## Notes

1. Claire Blandin, "Jalons pour une histoire de la presse magazine: l'image au cœur des récits," in *Manuel d'analyse de la presse magazine*, ed. Claire Blandin (Paris: Armand Colin, 2018), 17.
2. Bibia Pavard, "Presse(s) féminine(s): le poids du genre," in *Manuel d'analyse de la presse magazine*, ed. Claire Blandin (Paris: Armand Colin, 2018), 107.
3. See Bonifazio, "Political Photoromances," 393–413.
4. Michel Melot, "Introduction. L'image et les périodiques en Europe entre deux siècles (1880–1920)," in *L'Europe des revues (1880–1920). Estampes, photographies, illustrations*, ed. Évanghélia Stead and Hélène Védrine (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2008), 18.
5. Blandin, "Presse magazine," 19–20.
6. Kristof Van Gansen, *Arts Et Métiers Graphiques. Literature, typography, and advertising in a tempered modernism* (PhD diss., KU Leuven, 2017), 1.
7. Blandin, "Presse magazine," 24. Original text: "L'étude des magazines liés à l'apparition de nouvelles pratiques culturelles est essentielle pour cerner l'évolution des représentations à l'œuvre au sein d'une génération, et les modalités de leur diffusion par les industries culturelles. Dans leur diversité, les magazines de la seconde moitié du XXe siècle offrent en effet un vision panoptique unique de l'émergence et de la diffusion des productions culturelles."

8. Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 72.
9. Sullerot, *Presse Féminine*, 70.
10. Ann Tavernier and Romain Van Eenoo, *Vrouwenbladen. DEEL 1: Repertorium België 1936–1987* (Master's thesis, Ghent University, 1988), iii.
11. As quoted in Peeters, *Weekbladpers*, 23. Original text: "Een vrouwenblad heeft alleen zin wanneer het zijn eigen taak blijft vervullen, en die taak richt zich tot een aangename en onderhoudende dialoog met de vrouw zelf. In een dergelijk blad moet de vrouw een tribune ontdekken voor noden en dromen, wensen en wenken die haar dienstbaar kunnen zijn in het leven van elke dag. Daarom moet een dergelijk blad een morele standing hebben die het rijk van de vrouw niet omzet in een ongenaakbaar droomrijk van de vrouw. Het moet realistisch en delicaat zijn rol vervullen t.o.v. de talrijke problemen die het leven van de vrouw in onze dagen omringen, maar het mag ook weer geen betweter zijn die alle problemen wil oplossen."
12. Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 8.
13. Joy Leman, "The advice of a real friend, codes of intimacy and oppression in women's magazines (1937–1955)," *Women's Studies International Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (1980): 64.
14. Iris Wassenaar, *Vrouwenbladen, spiegels van een mannenmaatschappij* (Amsterdam: Wetenschappelijke Uitgeverij, 1976), 71 and 81.
15. Pavard, "Presse(s) feminine(s)," 119.
16. Ann Tavernier and Romain Van Eenoo, *Vrouwenbladen. DEEL 2: De tweede emancipatiegolf in België, de berichtgeving in vrouwenbladen 1965–1975* (Master's thesis, Ghent University, 1988), 13.
17. *Madame* no. 216, January 1966.
18. For a detailed study of the "discourses" of magazines seen as polyphonic media, see François Provenzano, "Le discours de la presse magazine," in *Manuel d'analyse de la presse magazine*, ed. Claire Blandin (Paris: Armand Colin, 2018), 85–104.
19. Pavard, "Presse(s) feminine(s)," 121.
20. Colangelo and Di Gregorio, "Roman-photo déviant."
21. Wassenaar, *Vrouwenbladen*, 81.
22. Given the lack of an archive of Belgian photonovels, this list might be expanded as future research reveals more photonovels in Belgian weeklies. I have tried to access as many magazines as possible in the premises of the KBR, but not all material is available there (in Belgium, the 'legal deposit' system was only introduced in 1966).
23. They are then analyzed in more depth in Chapter 4.1.
24. In general terms, these kinds of photonovels tended to occupy whole issues or be published in a different format and size, making it unlikely to find them in women's weeklies.
25. Continuation notes chapter 3 – start with note 25]  
Report "Het Rijk der Vrouw N.V.," Brussels, 1966, p.4.



26. Peeters, *Weekbladpers*, 34.
27. For a full discussion, see Roel Vande Winkel and Dirk Van Engeland, *Edith Kiel & Jan Vanderheyden: Pioniers van de Vlaamse film* (Brussels: Cinematek, 2014).
28. For a full discussion of film-photonovels, see Baetens, *Film Photonovel*.
29. It should be noted that drawn-novels, although not discussed here, were a typical item published not just in *Mon Copain*, but in many of these magazines.
30. Simons, *Geschiedenis*, 64–66.
31. For an evolution of De Standaard, see Gaston Durnez, *De Standaard: Het levensverhaal van een Vlaamse krant van 1948 tot de VUM* (Tielt: Lannoo, 1993).
32. Durnez, *De Standaard*, 82, and Benoît Mouchart, *À l'ombre de la ligne claire. Jacques Van Melkebeke entre Hergé et Jacobs* (Brussels: Les Impressions nouvelles, 2014), 179.
33. Laurence Mundschau, *Le dernier numéro: Le discours autoréférentiel de fermeture des hebdomadaires d'information générale en Belgique francophone (1950–2000)* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses universitaires de Louvain, 2007), 439.
34. “Weekblad voor het Gezin” became “Weekblad voor Vrouw en Gezin”. Flour, *Bronnen*, 209.
35. Simons, *Geschiedenis*, 73.
36. Flour, *Bronnen*, 209.
37. Report “Uitgeverij J. Hoste – De Persgroep (Brussel – Kobbegem),” Gent: Liberaal Archief, no. 12, February 20<sup>th</sup> 1978.
38. Reports “Uitgeverij J. Hoste – De Persgroep (Brussel – Kobbegem),” no. 224, January 10<sup>th</sup> 1983 and no. 229, February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1983.
39. Report “Uitgeverij J. Hoste – De Persgroep (Brussel – Kobbegem),” no. 241, May 9<sup>th</sup> 1983. Original text: “Ons Volk: Blijft achteruitgaan. Deze uitgave zal worden stopgezet. Juiste datum staat nog niet vast. Er zal naar gestreefd worden de lezers van Ons Volk over te halen naar het Rijk der Vrouw.”
40. Olivier was interviewed twice: on February 13<sup>th</sup> 2019 and then again April 24<sup>th</sup> 2019. Both interviews were followed by an email exchange.
41. <https://www.kb.nl/themas/tijdschriften/het-rijk-der-vrouw>.
42. Flour, *Bronnen*, 170, and Temmerman and Van De Voorde “Absent Husbands,” 4.
43. Flour, *Bronnen*, 170.
44. *Ibid.*, 172.
45. Peeters, *Weekbladpers*, 22.
46. <https://www.libelle.be/doe-mee-met-libelle/femmes-daujourdhui-blaast-80-kaarsjes-uit/> and Benoit Vanees, “De geboorte van het Rijk der Vrouw.”
47. Peeters, *Weekbladpers*, 22.
48. Flour, *Bronnen*, 172, and Peeters, *Weekbladpers*, 22.
49. Simons, *Het boek in Vlaanderen*, 384, and Flour, *Bronnen*, 193.

50. Jacqueline Aubenas, Suzanne Van Rokeghem, and Jeanne Vercheval-Vervoort, *Des Femmes dans l'histoire en Belgique, depuis 1830* (Brussels: Luc Pire, 2006), 140, and Serra, *Roman-photo*, 53.
51. Aubenas, Van Rokeghem, and Vercheval-Vervoort, *Des Femmes*, 140, and Els Flour, *Répertoire des sources pour l'histoire des femmes en Belgique: deel 1: Répertoire de la presse féminine et féministe en Belgique 1830–1994* (Brussels: Ministerie van Arbeid en Tewerkstelling, 1994), 196.
52. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 53.
53. <https://www.libelle.be/doe-mee-met-libelle/femmes-daujourdhui-blaast-80-kaarsjes-uit/>.
54. Durand and Habrand, *Histoire de l'édition*, 201.
55. Flour, *Répertoire des sources*, 35.
56. And not, as reported by Peeters, *Weekbladpers*, 22, in 1933.
57. Durand and Habrand, *Histoire de l'édition*, 202, and Philippe Brun, *Histoire du journal Spirou et des publications des éditions Dupuis*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Paris: Glénat, 1981), 11.
58. Durand and Habrand, *Histoire de l'édition*, 204, and Simons, *Het boek in Vlaanderen*, 513.
59. In 1954, according to Peeters, *Weekbladpers*, 103.
60. Flour, *Répertoire des sources*, 91–92.
61. *Ibid.*, 91–92.
62. Peeters, *Weekbladpers*, 117.
63. Interview with Jean-Pol, August 16<sup>th</sup> 2018.
64. Durand and Habrand, *Histoire de l'édition*, 292–293.
65. For a comparison between Charlier's scenarios for comics and for photonovels, see Benoît Glaude, *La bande dialoguée. Une histoire des dialogues de bande dessinée (1830–1960)* (Tours: Presses Universitaires François-Rabelais, 2019), 285–289.
66. Peeters, *Weekbladpers*, 92.
67. *Ibid.*, 103.
68. The Royal Library of Belgium holds copies of *Piccolo* as of February 4<sup>th</sup> 1928, when the first issue of *Piccolo*'s fourth year was published. If the magazine appeared weekly since its beginning and we consider that a year has fifty-two weeks, the first issue of *Piccolo* was published on February 7<sup>th</sup> 1925.
69. Original text in *Piccolo* no. 19, May 8<sup>th</sup> 1960: “Bestemming Liefde, zei de fotoredacteur, legde een aantal grote vellen met opgeplakte foto's voor me neer en grinnikte. – Kijk maar eens wat je er van vindt... Ik begon plaatjes te kijken en te lezen en was er in minder dan geen tijd met gloeiende oren in verdiept. Omdat ik nu eenmaal schaamteloos romantisch ben en een fotoroman over liefde, luchtvaart en avontuur me ademloos boeit. Enfin, volgende week kunt u er ook kennis van nemen, want dan beginnen we met de plaatsing van 'Bestemming Liefde' in *Piccolo*.”
70. *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* no. 440, February 4<sup>th</sup> 1961.

71. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 19.
72. Simons, *Geschiedenis*, 153.
73. <https://www.mediahuis.be/nl/over-ons/historiek>.
74. Peeters, *Weekbladpers*, 23.
75. *Ibid.*, 34.
76. “Uitgeverij Mediaxis maakt werk van omzetgroei,” *De Tijd*, May 28<sup>th</sup> 1998.
77. *Panorama* no. 38, 19 September 1961.
78. An email exchange with one of Real Presse’s directors, José Schoovaerts, confirmed that, alongside Jacques Van Melkebeke, a team of Poles also worked for the agency on the making of photonovels.
79. We had the chance to interview Jean-Pol on August 16<sup>th</sup> 2018.
80. Mouchart, *Ombre de la ligne claire*, 187.
81. Flour, *Bronnen*, 79–80.
82. *Ibid.*, 80, and Peeters, *Weekbladpers*, 28.
83. Flour, *Bronnen*, 80.
84. Peeters, *Weekbladpers*, 34.
85. *Ibid.*, 83. Original text: “waarschijnlijk [...] van buitenlandse oorsprong.”
86. Mouchart, *Ombre de la ligne claire*, 187.
87. Interview with Jean-Pol, August 16<sup>th</sup> 2018.
88. *Rosita* February 20<sup>th</sup> 1962 – November 13<sup>th</sup> 1962, no. 8-46.
89. *Rosita* November 20<sup>th</sup> 1962 – August 6<sup>th</sup> 1963, no. 47-32.
90. *Rosita* February 13<sup>th</sup> 1962, no. 7.
91. Flour, *Bronnen*, 111–112.
92. The photonovel “Schijn en werkelijkheid” (January 10<sup>th</sup> 1970 – September 26<sup>th</sup> 1970).
93. Rita Ghesquiere and Patricia Quaghebeur, *Averbode, een uitgever apart (1877–2002)* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 55.
94. Ghesquiere and Quaghebeur, *Averbode*, 61.
95. Geert De Vriese, 1976 *De zomer van ons leven* (Antwerp: Houtekiet, 2016), 242.
96. For more on this, see Faber, Minuit, and Takodjerad, *Nous Deux*, 105–135.
97. Report “Uitgeverij J. Hoste – De Persgroep (Brussel – Kobbegem),” no. 338, September 16<sup>th</sup> 1985.
98. “Ze wilde hem zo graag vertrouwen,” 24 May 1987 – 28 June 1987, and “Lastig als je zo verlegen bent,” 8 November 1987 – 13 December 1987.
99. More on this expansion can be found in Durnez, *De Standaard*, 82.
100. Flour, *Bronnen*, and Tavernier and Van Eenoo, *Vrouwenbladen. DEEL 1*.
101. 1934 was an important year in the publishing history of Dupuis because it marked the moment when Jean Dupuis expanded its offer to the Flemish market, showing a deep understanding of the needs of not just the francophone readers, but also the netherlandophone readers of the time.

102. Although *Télé-Moustique* did publish later in time artistic photonovels by Plissart, which were not translated in *HUMO*.
103. For example, cyclist Hugo Koblet acted in the photonovel “Le champion bien-aimé / De geliefde kampioen” by Bernar Keller, published between October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1954 and February 12<sup>th</sup> 1955 in *Lectures d’Aujourd’hui / Lectuur voor Allen*. See Chapter 4.1.5.
104. We had the chance to interview Richard Olivier about his work and specifically his photonovels on February 13<sup>th</sup> 2019 and then again April 24<sup>th</sup> 2019, both followed by an email exchange.



# Chapter 4

## Making photonovels

*[P]hotonovels are industrial products, regardless of their cultural significance, and this implies a production process that begins with a text and ends with its distribution on printed paper. In this process, a large number of people are involved and various techniques are applied.<sup>1</sup>*

**H**ow photonovels were made – from concept, to script, to shooting, to printing – is the subject of this chapter. In addition to describing the process and the roles needed to create a photonovel, special attention is given to technical aspects, which are necessary for a good understanding of the final results offered to the reader. It is the technology that creates a frame of possibilities within which photonovels could be made, enhancing or limiting their production and contributing to defining their identity.

General concepts are discussed in addition to specifically Belgian elements. The theory of making a photonovel was similar in the various countries that produced and published them, and this chapter describes it as it was. However, it also enriches this information with data gathered on the Belgian corpus. Therefore lists of recurring authors, photographers and actors are given in order to sketch a picture of what must have been the Belgian production context, with its variations and characters. Given the difficulty or sheer impossibility of recovering some of the material concerning the photonovel production in Belgium – the preparatory material of photonovels was generally thrown away, the contracts between magazines and authors or between authors and their production crew have never been kept or did not exist altogether – the analysis necessarily has some shortcomings and mainly relies on a close study of the corpus and on the information gathered via interviews with interested parties. Nevertheless, the result is an insightful overview of the production side of photonovels that explores and highlights the most important elements of the Belgian corpus.

## 4.1 Creating a photonovel

The creation of a photonovel entailed a number of people working together towards the same goal. Photonovels' crews could vary in size according to the available budget, the scope of the photonovels, the needs of the magazine, and the story itself, but were usually always composed of at least the following people: an author of the photonovel, who wrote the story and/or the scenario or, if based on an existing story, took care of the adaptation; a photographer; and actors or models, as many as the story required. In addition to this limited core, there could be a scenarist, one or more assistants, somebody to write the adaptation, somebody else to write the dialogue, a make-up artist, a costume designer, a hairstylist, additional photographers, and extras.<sup>2</sup>

Whether directly or indirectly, all these people worked for or alongside the redaction of the magazines that would publish the photonovel. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the magazine could hold a certain decision-making power over the photonovel. Varying depending on the specifics of each case, with the redaction playing a more or less participatory role in requesting or making the photonovel, said redaction could intervene on the content of the story in order to ensure its alignment with the editorial policy of the magazine, on the layout and the font of the title and credits, and had full decision-making power over translation of the photonovel, when needed.<sup>3</sup> This authority on the photonovel was thus shared with the author himself and created different dynamics, as will be discussed below.

In 1956 a certain Ennio Jacobelli described the proper way to make a photonovel in his handbook "Istruzioni pratiche per la realizzazione del fotoromanzo" ("Practical guidelines for the creation of a photonovel"). This was a work published by the Editrice Politecnica Italiana, as part of a collection of handbooks on practical subjects. The aim of the collection, targeting "a less-educated audience eager to achieve practical knowledge outside traditional educational structures",<sup>4</sup> was to provide practical knowledge and training on a variety of 'new' subjects, such as radio, television and photonovels, that required new skill sets to approach and/or fix them. "By 1956, the photo novel had a well-established format, stable and solid enough to be the subject of a professional how-to handbook",<sup>5</sup> but still lacked an institutionalized training and relied rather on a more informal experience-based acquisition of knowledge, often within a tutor-pupil context. Jacobelli's handbook thus provided a deeper understanding of what photonovels were and neatly structured, in an illustrated step-by-step fashion, all the necessary elements, know-how and technical processes that concurred in the creation of a photonovel. However, as noted by Baetens, Van Den Bergh and Van Den Bossche, Jacobelli, though certainly knowledgeable when it came to the making of a photonovel and technical aspects, at times seems to describe a practice that both in content and form had little to do with what readers knew of photonovels – "in many cases the power of the culturally dominant model, which is of course not the photo novel but cinema, continues to have an impact on how the dominated genre is theorized."<sup>6</sup> Keeping in

mind its shortcomings, Jacobelli's handbook is nonetheless an interesting point of departure for the analysis of the production side of photonovels. In this chapter, this is complemented by other sources, some bibliographical and some others oral, such as the interviews with Michel Courant and Richard Olivier,<sup>7</sup> in order to sketch out not just how photonovels were made, but also, more specifically, the production context of Belgian magazines. To this end, lists of photonovels' authors, photographers and actors are also analyzed. All of these aspects contribute to defining the production context of Belgium. This was in some regards clearly similar to those of Italy and France – varied, intermedial, interconnected – but being a smaller market, it also presented its own specificity and complexities.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4.1.1 Subject

Whether the request for a new photonovel came from the magazine's redaction, the publishers of the magazine, an agency, or it was an independent decision of the author, the first step in the making of a photonovel was commonly to define the subject, the story to be told. This often stemmed from an original creative work, but it could also be adapted from already existing stories: books, movies, TV series, theater shows, etc.

The scenarios could largely differ, spanning time and space, and with a varying number of characters and plot twists. It was not uncommon to find in the same magazine one photonovel that took place in present times and dealt with an aspiring young model, next to an historical photonovel on the (imagined) life of a castellan. The differences depended not only on the chosen scenario, which could take place in various places and epochs, but also on the practical possibilities: was there budget to go shoot in another country? Was it possible to recreate a credible setting without traveling far? Was there money allotted for renting costumes or would the actors need to bring their own clothes? How fast did the photonovel need to be finished?<sup>9</sup> Despite the differences, however, and within their possibilities, the subjects of photonovels tended to feature some recurring elements that could be summarized as: fictional romance, happy ending, and lack of action.

The first element can be seen as the foundational aspect of photonovels' stories: they traditionally belonged to the sentimental genre.<sup>10</sup> Even when this was not the case, in the rather rare instances where the stories deviated from tradition and attempted a different genre, as we have seen, for example, for the detective photonovels in *Panorama*, some kind of romance was nevertheless always present. The love story was fictional, usually between a young woman and a young man who could come from different social classes: both from the working or middle classes, one of the two rich or even aristocratic, or both of them well-off. The way the story developed usually followed a fixed scheme: the couple falls in love, but, because of their social differences, or for other reasons, the two are kept apart and their love cannot immediately find satisfaction. Other than their standing, the obstacle could be another woman competing for the love of the man, a secret 'external' to the relationship but that nonetheless puts a strain on it, memory loss or a misunderstanding.<sup>11</sup>



However, and this brings us to the second recurring element of photonovels, the happy ending was (almost) always guaranteed. As seen in Chapter 1, photonovels played an important role not only in providing entertainment and escapism to the readers, but also in infusing a much needed sense of hope in the difficult years after the war.<sup>12</sup> For this reason they were fictional stories that did not deal with current events, had a rather simple and straightforward plot and always ended on a positive note. Even as the postwar situation improved and the economy recovered, the light tone and the happy ending remained defining elements of photonovels. Particularly appreciated was the ‘love trumps all’ trope: the obstacle that kept the young couple apart was defeated or overcome and the couple could finally be together. Typical of the time, the happy ending often equated to marriage, seen as the culmination of love.<sup>13</sup> When the scenarios, though keeping a romantic element, tackled a different genre, such as suspense or crime, the happy ending was not necessarily the victory of love, but rather the resolution of the crime around which the story revolved, and/or the capture or death of the criminals. Crime and suspense were however not part of the average Belgian photonovel. Most works did follow the conventional sentimental and melodramatic plots. The most important body of work, that by Hubert Serra, definitely avoids the tendency toward crime and suspense, which in the Belgian context often adopted an ironic and comical tone: crime and suspense were never of the hard-boiled type, but gentle attempts to offer a variation on the eternal love story theme.

A third element essential to these stories was the general lack of action pictures, regardless of the specific plot (crime and suspense stories did not try for instance to play with violent car chase scenes). This stemmed from a technical difficulty. With the technology, budget and cameras of the time it was in fact difficult to photograph moving subjects in a satisfactory way. Therefore, while thinking about the subject, authors tended to prefer stories that could focus on relationships, emotions and, in general, static situations. Action, when necessary to the development of the story, was rarely captured in the photographs, but rather told by the captions.<sup>14</sup> More on this can be found in Chapters 4.1.4 and 4.1.6.

In addition to the content of the photonovel, there were considerations to be made concerning the formal aspects of the story. When published in women’s weeklies, photonovels were usually serialized. Each magazine issue contained an episode of the story, which could run for a total of, generally, ten to twenty installments. The context was not strictly regulated: there was no minimum amount of pages or episodes for a photonovel, nor was there a fixed amount of pages dedicated to the photonovel in each magazine.<sup>15</sup> However, authors of the stories needed to take format into consideration in order to provide the subject with a specific length, which would allow it to be broken up into a fixed number of episodes.<sup>16</sup> This also meant that the pace of the story needed to match the division into episodes, concluding each one with, if not a real cliffhanger, at least a minimum of suspense.<sup>17</sup> This structuring of the subject into a fixed form was at the foundation of the process that turned the raw story into a script.

When the photonovel was requested by the magazine's redaction, it was at this stage that the author presented the scenario and the editor-in-chief chimed in to make sure that the story was aligned with the whole of the magazine.<sup>18</sup> This happened especially in Italy and France, where the majority of the magazines with photonovels were entirely dedicated to photonovels. The tendency in Belgium, however, was different. As seen above, the magazines that published photonovels were mostly women's weeklies that tackled a variety of subjects and presented different features and articles; photonovels were only a part of the whole of the magazine. Therefore, most of the photonovels were produced by independent authors and only then sold to the magazines. The only magazine that consistently had an employed author of photonovels was *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw*, and its sister magazine *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui / Lectuur voor Allen*: Bernard Keller for the first years, and Hubert Serra for the entire production of *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*'s photonovels, except for very few photonovels in the early years. In this case, the editor-in-chief (Rosita Werbeeck and her assistant Marthe De Prelle)<sup>19</sup> was presented with the possible scenarios by Keller or Serra and decided upon which stories would be turned into photonovels and which had to be discarded.<sup>20</sup> Serra's memoirs make very clear that he knew very well how far he could go and which kind of stories and even more which kind of pictures would never make it.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Script and plot

The plot was the backbone of a photonovel. Writing the script meant turning the story into the format of a photonovel, providing it with a structure reflected in the series of captions and speech balloons so typical of photonovels. Where the subject gave an impression of spaces, scenes, characters and locations, the scriptwriter had to turn these elements into clear pointers for their actual realization.<sup>22</sup> This meant giving a series of well-defined indications on settings, characters, dynamics of the scenes and so on.<sup>23</sup> For the reasons specified, the script was a sort of *vademecum* for all people involved in the making of the photonovel: not only the director, who based his instructions on this, but also for the photographers, the actors and, when present, make-up artists and costume designers.

The format of the script could vary. It could be written out as a theater or movie script – Jacobelli mentions 200–300 pages detailing each scene, although this seems somewhat exaggerated;<sup>24</sup> or it could be accompanied by a storyboard, where the various images making the photonovel would be sketched out (Figures 14 and 16, with the corresponding published results in Figures 15 and 17). The advantage of sketching out the scenes was that of creating a first visual representation of the photonovel, which could then serve as a starting point and reference for the photographs to be made. Indication on the posture actors had to hold, the distance from the camera, the lens to be used and the lighting arrangements could all be included in the script.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the making of a storyboard also proves key to the cost-efficiency of the actual shooting: most photonovels are made on a shoestring budget, and it is useless to repeat that time is money.



**Figure 14:** Storyboard made by Hubert Serra for his photonoël “Les nuits de Bombay”, published in *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui* from November 13<sup>th</sup> 1979 until March 4<sup>th</sup> 1980. Private collection of Michel Courant.



**Figure 15:** Hubert Serra, “Les Nuits de Bombay”. On the left: 3<sup>rd</sup> page of the 14<sup>th</sup> episode in *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui*, February 12<sup>th</sup> 1980. On the right: 5<sup>th</sup> page of the 7<sup>th</sup> episode in *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui*, December 25<sup>th</sup> 1979 (© Roularta).

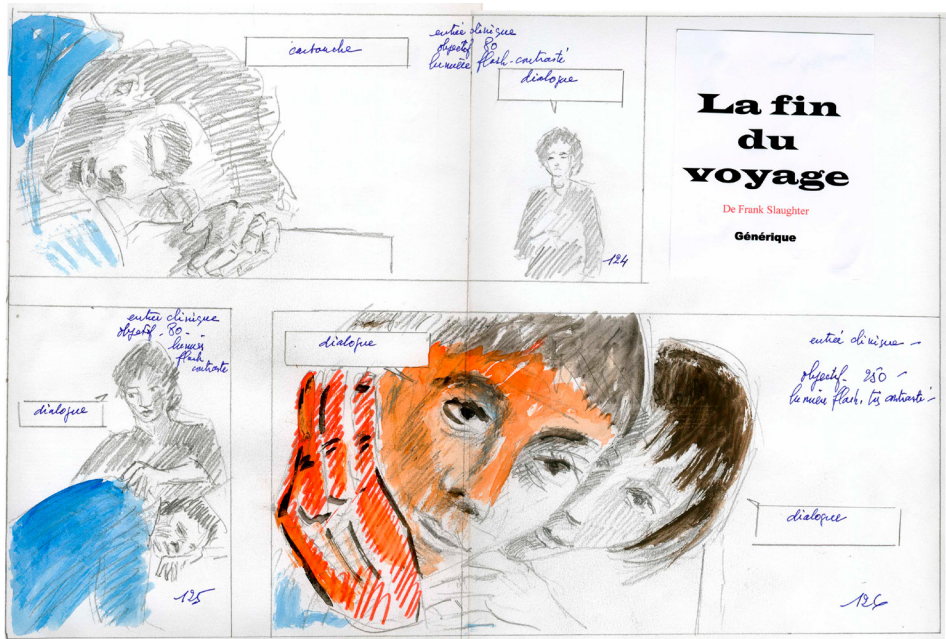


Figure 16: Storyboard made by Hubert Serra for his photonovel “La Fin du Voyage”, published in *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui* from no. 1350 (March 17<sup>th</sup> 1971) to no. 1378 (September 29<sup>th</sup> 1971). Private collection of Michel Courant.



Figure 17: Hubert Serra, “La Fin du voyage”, episode 20 in *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui*, July 28<sup>th</sup> 1971 (© Roularta).

The script had the aim of breaking down the stories into smaller parts, in order to create the serialized format of photonovels. Each episode needed to be able to work on its own and therefore followed a defined structure.<sup>26</sup> In each episode the story evolved; the pace was generally slow, focusing mainly on the emotions of the characters and less on a fast-paced, complex narrative. With a summary of the previous events, it was possible to be up to date and follow the story from virtually each episode. Naturally, anyone who followed from the beginning had the deepest understanding not just of the happenings, but especially of the characters' developments and feelings. The ending of each episode, signaled by a "to be continued" indication at the bottom of the page, ideally had to leave the readers wishing for more, in order to ensure that they would keep on buying the magazine week after week: photonovels do not shy away from very conventional cliffhangers.

As mentioned above, there was no strict rule on the length of the photonovel or an episode thereof. In the Belgian magazines analyzed above, the average length of a photonovel was around sixteen episodes,<sup>27</sup> with some photonovels having to twenty or more episodes, and others stopping at ten or less. Most magazines dedicated a certain number of pages to the photonovels they published, thus determining how long each episode needed to be, although the length of the episodes could suddenly change. Other magazines, however, did not have a fixed amount. We can infer that either the scriptwriter knew the number of pages allowed per episode by the specific magazine and worked to comply with it, or was able to shuffle photographs and texts around and shorten or lengthen the episode according to the needs of the moment. This latter behavior is often adopted by the agencies that sold photonovels: the agencies held the photonovels' preparatory material and could therefore modify as much as they wanted of the story, as seen for example for "De Storm" in *Tiptop* in section 3. It is also not impossible to think that, for the photonovels made by an in-house author that did not require the team to travel far, there existed a very loose script with a general idea of how to start and how to end the photonovel, but the specific details were written on a weekly basis: if the photonovel was successful, the story could be lengthened, if not, it could be cut short, as can be deduced from the varying length of most photonovels in the early years of the genre. In the case of the Belgian photonovel, which appeared much later than its French and Italian models, there was however already more standardization at the level of the shooting process: the photonovels were completely shot before being serialized, which made it more difficult to play with either extensions or abbreviations.

The text of photonovels<sup>28</sup> was generally structured around the two main types of text of this format: captions and speech balloons. Captions were generally placed among or on top of photographs. The text in the captions provided contextual descriptions or worked as a bridge between scenes.<sup>29</sup> As already mentioned, action was often described in the caption rather than depicted by the photograph: it was easier to verbally describe an action than to actually shoot it, with the consequence that action was often in the words and not

in the images.<sup>30</sup> Speech balloons were used for dialogue. These were generally between two characters, and more rarely among three or more. Although they could present slight variations in their look, they never looked like the speech balloons typical of comics nor did they have the same variations.<sup>31</sup> A different kind of balloon could be seen when the aim was to convey the thoughts of the characters. However, when characters were alone in the scene, their thoughts were often conveyed in the caption or via regular speech balloons, thus often depicting the characters as talking to themselves. This kind of dialogue was usually a monologue dedicated to the expression or explanation of deep feelings, with the aim of allowing readers to closely follow what was happening in the heart of the various fictional people populating the story.

The language used in the dialogue was literary rather than spoken. It generally belonged to a higher register and made little distinction among characters, reducing it to a general sameness. So the peasant talked exactly like the aristocrat, the child like the adult, and characters of historical photonovels used contemporary inflections rather than historically accurate speech. Although the dialogue followed the grammar rules of written language, oral language and sayings made their appearance in the dialogue, in the beginning sporadically, but becoming more and more widespread from the 1970s.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4.1.3 Director

The person in charge of the making of the photonovel, who oversaw all the work and people involved, was credited differently by different magazines: sometimes he was called the ‘director’, other times the ‘creator’ and on other occasions he could be the ‘maker’ or the ‘author’. The verb associated with his work could also differ, ranging from ‘directing’, to ‘producing’, to ‘making’, to ‘scriptwriting’. This variety shows the scope of his work as the coordinator of the project. Depending on the budget and the production, the figure of the director (or author, as more commonly used in this research) could encompass a number of roles: the author of the photonovel, the scenarist, the dialogue writer, the person in charge of the adaptation, and the person making the storyboards and sketches. In other words, there could be one person who wrote the scenario or adapted an already existing story and then took care of the script and the storyboard, or different people could work together under the same director. The masculine pronoun used so far to refer to the author is telling: authors of photonovels were predominantly men. This contributes to the intrinsic contradiction found in women’s weeklies, where the target audience were women, but the people creating the content were usually men, as seen in Chapter 1.4.<sup>33</sup>

The author of a photonovel was often a subcontractor for a magazine or a publisher, employed only for the scope of the photonovel.<sup>34</sup> However, he could also be an independent author who created photonovels and either sold them directly to magazines (as in the case of Richard Olivier for example), or, in more professionalized cases, was represented by an agency that took care of finding magazines interested in buying his photonovels.<sup>35</sup>

In other instances, more commonly in Italy and France than in Belgium, the author of the photonovels was employed full time by the magazine. This was done when the redaction of the magazine had a clear view of photonovels as an integral and unmissable part of the magazine, and in Belgium this case is consistently observed only in *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw* and, in a smaller scale, in its offshoot magazine *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui / Lectuur voor Allen*, with respectively Huber Serra and Bernard Keller.

As the spokesperson for the project, it was up to the author to put together a team to create the photonovel.<sup>36</sup> Authors who produced many photonovels tended to work with the same crew. Hubert Serra, for example, had a number of recurring photographers he relied on for shooting his photonovels, chosen on the basis of a shared view and sensitivity in relation to esthetic matters.<sup>37</sup>

Two general tendencies can be spotted among authors of photonovels, though always keeping in mind that the working methodology could vary greatly from author to author. On the one hand, there were authors who made photonovels only out of necessity (work, money) rather than personal interest. This was generally reflected in the photonovels they made: the stories were often less original and followed the trite romantic story development, the photographs were of lower quality and less expressive, and the general production lacked sharpness, confining these stories to a general sameness. On the other hand, there were authors who made photonovels out of interest or passion. The creation of the photonovel was then usually characterized by a willingness to enrich the stories with original traits, a particular attention to the photographs, and a general eye to the overall quality of the production. The results were surprisingly fresh photonovels that either presented unusual elements while playing safely within the boundaries of the format, or stretched the established patterns and introduced innovative elements. The higher quality of these stories did not necessarily stem from a more professional way of working. On the contrary, the photonovel production could be a one-time project and therefore self-expression and originality were central to the endeavor.

The general contempt for the photonovel, which characterized the years of its popularity as seen in Chapter 1.3, extended to its production as well. This meant that often authors of photonovels, especially the ones who were renowned elsewhere, tended to either minimize their contribution to the photonovel world or used pseudonyms. Alongside this was a lack of standardization concerning the credits for photonovels: at times, credits were present and the information they displayed could largely differ; at other times credits were missing, leaving the photonovels anonymous. Sullerot also notices that the absence of credits was in some cases justified by a desire of the editors to mask the foreign origin of a photonovel.<sup>38</sup> The situation that we find today when studying the photo-

novel is therefore one defined by gaps and variations, and needs to be addressed carefully. The often unregulated circumstances of the creation of photonovels and the general lack of standardization require a thorough analysis and, at times, some guesswork. The two tendencies spotted above seem to tie into the central discussion regarding the presence or absence of credits for photonovels. While the layout of the title and credits were often the responsibility of the magazines' editors and not directly of the authors of photonovels, one can wonder whether the authors who imposed a unified and clear authorial view on their photonovels would be more likely to be credited, out of a sense of respect and ownership of their own work, than those who produced unoriginal photonovels in series.

Between the magazines' redactions and editors on the one hand and the authors of photonovels on the other, a certain balance needed to be struck, in order to align aims and expectations. By analyzing the Belgian corpus, it is possible to see how differently magazines approached and dealt with the presence of photonovels. At times, the photonovel was perfectly integrated into the magazine, testifying to an effort towards unity and conformity of content. This was definitely the case of the more upscale *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* / *Het Rijk der Vrouw*. Other times, a lack of unity is unmistakable in the inconstant presence, numbering, layout and positioning of the photonovels. Particularly, *Iris* is the magazine in the corpus that stands out for the lack of uniformity of photonovels, presenting not only varying layouts, but also gaps of weeks or even months between one photonovel and the next. Photonovels were variably seen as an addition to the magazine to be treated separately, or as an integral part of it to be integrated with the rest of the content. A more in-depth look at the life of photonovels in the magazines ecosystem is the subject of Chapter 5.

### ***Directors of photonovels in the Belgian corpus***

Photonovels published in Belgium often did not feature credits. When they did, it is possible to notice recurring names. Out of the 604 photonovels digitized, 300 are uncredited. The authors mentioned for the remaining 304 photonovels are listed in table 2. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the director of a photonovel could be the author of the photonovel, the scenarist, the author of the dialogue or the person in charge of the adaptation. This list takes into consideration the person who is credited as either the author or the director/creator, unless indicated otherwise. Note that this list does not include the names of authors such as Jacques Van Melkebeke, who was never mentioned in the credits of the photonovels he directed. He is nonetheless discussed at the end of the chapter. Also note that the digitized photonovels are the ones published in installments in the Belgian women's magazines analyzed above.



Author	No. of photonovels directed	Magazines
Hubert Serra	184	<i>Het Rijk der Vrouw, Femmes d'Aujourd'hui, Lectures d'Aujourd'hui, Panorama, Piccolo, Tiptop</i>
Bernard Keller	46	<i>Lectures d'Aujourd'hui, Lectuur voor Allen, Het Rijk der Vrouw</i>
Jacques Simonnet	16	<i>Lectures d'Aujourd'hui, Het Rijk der Vrouw</i>
H. and R. Caouissin	9	<i>Bonnes Soirées, Mimosa, Vrouw en Huis</i>
Penny Els	8	<i>Joepie</i>
Raymond Cauchetier	8	<i>Bonnes Soirées, Mimosa, Chez Nous, Ons Volk</i>
Richard Olivier and Gérald Frydman	7	<i>Chez Nous, Ons Volk, Madame</i>
Anne-Marie Berger	5	<i>Bonnes Soirées, Mimosa, Vrouw en Huis</i>
Ann and Gwen	2	<i>Bonnes Soirées, Mimosa</i>
E. Verzar	2	<i>Lectures d'Aujourd'hui, Het Rijk der Vrouw</i>
François Morel	2	<i>Chez Nous, Ons Volk</i>
Honoré Willems	2	<i>Sportif '68, Sport '68</i>
Jean-Claude Pascal	2	<i>Lectures d'Aujourd'hui, Het Rijk der Vrouw</i>
Pal Lukacs	2	<i>Panorama</i>
A. Brice	1	<i>Vrouw en Huis</i>
Fernando de Giorgio	1	<i>Iris</i>
G. Serra	1	<i>Piccolo</i>
Isabelle Maray	1	<i>Bonnes Soirées</i>
J.J. Bourgois	1	<i>Bonnes Soirées</i>
J. Lacombe	1	<i>Piccolo</i>
J.P. Blonday	1	<i>Piccolo</i>
Jean Maxime	1	<i>Vrouw en Huis</i>
Jean-Jacques Vierne / Michio Koga	1	<i>Lectures d'Aujourd'hui</i>

**Table 2:** List of authors of photonovels with corresponding number of photonovels directed for Belgian magazines and the magazines where these stories were printed. The list is organized with the highest numbers on top and the lowest at the bottom.

The table shows the name of the author next to the number of photonovels he/she directed that featured credits. The magazines in which these photonovels were published have also been added in order to be able to compare the various magazines and their trends in this context. When analyzing the gathered data, what is immediately apparent is the disparity in the number of photonovels directed per author. When looking at these numbers, two essential aspects need to be kept in mind. First of all, the number encompasses all the times the name of an author is mentioned, but it does not differentiate between

translations; this means that, for example, Bernard Keller did not necessarily directed forty-six photonovels, but rather some of them are netherlandophone translations of his francophone works.<sup>39</sup> Secondly, the number does not distinguish between photonovels imported from Italy or France and photonovels made in Belgium. In other words, the number says nothing about the origin of the photonovel, whether it was a foreign photonovel bought by a Belgian magazine or whether it was a photonovel made specifically for a Belgian magazine. This distinction is not always clear, but where possible it is noted. Lastly, it should be pointed out that this inventory might be subject to changes due to the volatility of authoriality and publications in popular magazines.

Hubert Serra was by far the most productive (credited) author of photonovels published in Belgium, with 104 photonovels directed for six different magazines. More specifically, for *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* Serra directed two photonovels, which were then translated into Dutch and published in *Het Rijk der Vrouw*. For *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* he directed ninety-two photonovels, which amount to the entirety of the photonovels ever published by this magazine, as seen above. In *Het Rijk der Vrouw* Serra's name is recorded eighty-five times; however, these photonovels were translations of the ones published in *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* and *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*. In both *Panorama* and *Piccolo* there are two photonovels made by Hubert Serra, while *Tiptop* presents a revisited version of one of Serra's photonovels for *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*.<sup>40</sup> If we exclude the translations from the total amount, then we can establish that Serra directed ninety-six photonovels. Out of these, the ninety-two photonovels for *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* were certainly made for the magazine, while the remaining ones are more likely earlier photonovels Serra had directed for the French market that had been distributed to Belgium at a later moment. In his memoir, Serra mentions the photonovel "Colomba", published in *Bonnes Soirées* in 1962. This photonovel had been directed by him, but, once the photographs were printed, they were sent directly to the redaction of the magazine and thus Serra did not take care of the layout.<sup>41</sup> This would also explain why the photonovel is left uncredited and leaves open the possibility that more of Serra's photonovels populate the Belgian corpus despite the absence of credits. Serra's work for *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* mainly departed from existing sentimental novels. The adaptation of these novels was done by various people, who could take care of the scenario and the dialogue as well. These people likely worked for the redaction of the magazine and were consistently credited in the photonovels. The most recurring were: Violette Mariaud for scenario, adaptation and dialogue, a French editor and author who had also worked together with Mario Padovan;<sup>42</sup> Fernande Feron for adaptation, a French author of numerous sentimental novels published in the 1950s and 1960s; and Marc Augis for scenario and adaptation, the pen name of Simone Dever, a Belgian author, editor and journalist, also active within the redaction of *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*, among other magazines.

The situation is much more straightforward when it comes to Bernard Keller, second in the list for the amount of photonovels where he is credited as the author. He worked for

*Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*, for which he directed thirty-one photonovels. The remaining fifteen photonovels were translations into Dutch published either in *Lectuur voor Allen* (eight) or in *Het Rijk der Vrouw* (seven). Similarly, Jacques Simonnet directed a total of eight photonovels for *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* (two of which together with Marcel Picard), which were then translated into Dutch and published in *Het Rijk der Vrouw* a couple of months later. The adaptation of Simonnet's photonovels was frequently done by Keller. The fact that many of Keller's and Simonnet's photonovels were translated from *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* to *Lectuur voor Allen* and *Het Rijk der Vrouw*, solidifies the impression that when the publication of *Lectuur voor Allen* ceased, the Flemish readership had been directed towards *Het Rijk der Vrouw*, which picked up some of the photonovels created for *Lectuur voor Allen*'s twin magazine *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*. For *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*, Keller not only created photonovels, but was also an editor and the author of a number of articles on various subjects, which were, however, not translated into Dutch. Cross-referencing Keller and Simonnet within a private database of French photonovels revealed that while Bernard Keller only worked for *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*, Jacques Simonnet authored photonovels published in other weeklies, namely *Bonjour Bonheur*, *Rêves*, *Roman Film complet Chez Nous* and *Votre Cœur*. This discloses that Simonnet worked for a mix of Belgian and French magazines that published complete or serialized photonovels. It should be noted that the ones made for *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* are not to be found in any of the other francophone magazines.<sup>43</sup>

Next we find the French brothers Henri and Ronan Caouissin. Active as editors and writers as well as founders of the cinema production company Brittia Films, they are credited as the directors of photonovels in *Bonnes Soirées*, *Mimosa* and *Vrouw en Huis*. More specifically, they directed four photonovels published in *Bonnes Soirées* and translated into Dutch for *Mimosa*, and one, in Dutch translation, published in *Vrouw en Huis*. In this case the title of 'director' seems appropriate: all of the photonovels they realized were based on scenarios written by somebody else: Jean-Michel Charlier, J.J. Marine and M.H. Rompel for *Bonnes Soirées* and *Mimosa*, and J. Renault for *Vrouw en Huis*. The publication dates of these photonovels, spanning from 1960 to 1963, their limited number and, in *Bonnes Soirées* and *Mimosa*, their placement among other photonovels are all elements that suggest that the Caouissin brothers were not working specifically for one magazine, but rather independently created photonovels distributed to various magazines. This is corroborated when we look at the French market, where they are credited as the directors of photonovels for magazines such as *Bonjour Bonheur*, *Festival*, *Lisette*, *Nous Deux* and *Old Bridger*. However, the two scenarios written by Jean-Michel Charlier and J.J. Marine, both Belgian authors active within Dupuis (the publishing house of *Bonnes Soirées* and *Mimosa*) and scenarists of more than one photonovel, seem to indicate a reciprocal relationship between the magazine redaction and the Caouissin brothers, where the redaction provided the scripts and the Caouissins created the photonovels. The lack of records and contracts makes it

impossible to describe today how the system worked, but the recurring names and the ties connecting them help to sketch out a complex reality of what and how it might have been.

Penny Els is one of the very few women appearing on this list. She wrote the scenarios of the eight photonovels pertaining to the first wave of photonovels in *Joepie*. The credits mention Penny Els as the scenarist, but there is no indication of an author or director of the photonovel, thus in this analysis she is considered the author of the photonovels. Penny Els was the pen name of Els Van den Abbeele, a woman active in the music world who wrote many lyrics for artists such as Ann Christy, Jimmy Frey and John Terra. For *Joepie*, she not only took care of writing the scenarios of these photonovels, but she also worked for the redaction of the magazine, making it more likely that she actually took care of their production as a whole.

French photographer Raymond Cauchetier is credited as the director of one photonovel in *Mimosa*, the scenario of which was written by Jean-Michel Charlier and which was produced by Image-France. Since the photonovels in *Mimosa* were always translations of photonovels published in *Bonnes Soirées* and therefore “Het onmogelijke verraad” exists in its francophone version as “L'impossible trahison”, this photonovel presents a good example of the differences existing between translations and layouts (the topic is discussed in more depth below): where Cauchetier and Charlier are both credited in one, only Charlier is mentioned in the other. Thus, although Cauchetier is not credited in *Bonnes Soirées*, he has nonetheless been treated as the director of “L'impossible trahison” and counted as such on the list of authors. Cauchetier also directed three photonovels in *Chez Nous* and *Ons Volk*. The credits present in these cases no mention of other scenarists or photographers, making it likely that Cauchetier had not only directed these photonovels, but also authored and possibly photographed them as well. As for the Caouissin brothers, Cauchetier worked autonomously in France and his photonovels can be found in *Bonjour Bonheur*, *Roman Film complet Chez Nous*, *Super Film* and *Twist films*, in addition to the already mentioned *Bonnes Soirées*, *Mimosa*, *Chez Nous* and *Ons Volk*.

The seven photonovels directed by Richard Olivier were all made in collaboration with Gérald Frydman. Three of them are to be found in *Chez Nous*, with Dutch translations in *Ons Volk*, and the last one was published in *Madame*. Belgian author Richard Olivier worked for the magazine world as a young graduate of the Institut des Arts de Diffusion (IAD) of Brussels, before the start of his career as a filmmaker. Although he is credited as the author of only three photonovels in *Chez Nous*, he actually directed a few more that were left uncredited, namely “Isabelle”, “Le sire de Saint-Géry”, “Espions et chiffons”, “Au hasard des rues” and possibly a few others.<sup>44</sup> He was also active for the magazines *TV 2000*, *HUMO* and *Salut les Copains!*, producing what he called “photoscopes”, a hybridization of photonovels based on paparazzi photographs to which dialogue was added, and “photo-reportages” such as the one described in *Sportif '68 / Sport '68*.

With five credited photonovels is Anne-Marie Berger. As one of the few women credited as the author of photonovels, there is unfortunately very limited information on her, but it is likely that she was a French photonovel director and was often in charge of the adaptation as well. In the Belgian corpus she is credited in one photonovel in *Bonnes Soirées* and *Mimosa*, and three in *Vrouw en Huis*. Her name is always accompanied by that of a scenarist: Joly Marine for *Bonnes Soirées* and *Mimosa* (probably J.J. Marine), and Hubert Floriot and J. Dubresis for *Vrouw en Huis*. Photonovels directed by Anne-Marie Berger were also found in *Bonjour Bonheur*, *Ciné-Révélation*, *Fillette – Jeune Fille* and *Roman Film complet Chez Nous*. Since the three photonovels published in *Vrouw en Huis* are in Dutch (“Een vreemde ontvoering”, “Spionage op ’t atoomcentrum” and “Sporloos verdwenen”), it was expected that these were translations of francophone photonovels. As it turned out, through Michel Courant’s database, it was possible to establish that the three photonovels “Un étrange kidnapping”, “Rapt au centre atomique” and “Le mort vivant”, published in *Bonjour Bonheur* in 1959, were the three original photonovels that were then likely sold to *Vrouw en Huis* and translated for the Flemish audience.

Following Anne-Marie Berger, the list of authors presents a series of people who were credited as authors of photonovels only once or twice in the Belgian corpus. It seems safe to assume that the photonovels directed by these authors were of foreign origin and were bought by the Belgian magazines either directly from French or Italian magazines or via agencies. Relying once again on Michel Courant’s private database, it was possible to link most of the names to French or Italian photonovels published in a varied array of women’s magazines. Ann and Gwen published photonovels in *Confidences* and *Femme Moderne*, and took care of the adaptation of some photonovels by Hubert Serra. The names were pseudonyms for Ilka Rezette and Jacqueline Bolle, Belgian authors of not only sentimental novels, but also detective novels and children’s books. E. Verzar was not only an author of photonovels, but also a photographer and layout artist. It is hard to say whether François Morel and Honoré Willems were real people, but Richard Olivier claimed authorship of both photonovels where the two are mentioned as authors, making it likely that these were pseudonyms or collaborators. Jean-Claude Pascal was a French actor, singer and writer. He directed (and acted) in one photonovel published in *Lectures d’Aujourd’hui* and translated into Dutch for *Het Rijk der Vrouw*. There is no further mention of Pascal as an author of photonovels. However, the photographer of his photonovel was Jean-Paul Alphen, a French cinematographer who photographed many of Bernard Keller’s photonovels. Since Pascal’s photonovel was published among a series of Keller’s works and featured the same photographer, it is likely that this photonovel was either Keller’s or created in collaboration between Keller and Pascal. Pal Lukacs has been analyzed above<sup>45</sup> and was a Pole working for the agency Real Presse. Allen Brice directed photonovels published in *Roman Film complet Chez Nous*. Fernando de Giorgio was an Italian photonovel author whose works could be found in *Arc-en-Ciel*, *Côte d’Azur – super*, *Fascination*, *I Romanzi di*

*Sogno*, *Rebecca*, *Romances films*, *Sentimental*, *Sentimental votre photoroman* and *Violette*. G. Serra was Geneviève Serra, Hubert Serra's wife. She is credited as the author of photonovels in *Caroline Film*, *Mirabelle Film*, *Photo Mystère*, *Photo Suspense*, *Super Film*, *Tentation film* and *Twist films*. Whether she was actually the author of the photonovel or an assistant to her husband's work remains a mystery. The latter option seems more likely considering that in his autobiography Serra never mentions his wife working autonomously but rather as valuable help on his sets. Isabelle Maray directed the last photonovel published in *Bonnes Soirées*, but she is never mentioned elsewhere as an author of photonovels. The production of her photonovel is by Art-Press, the same as Jean Jacques Bourgois' photonovel, the penultimate in *Bonnes Soirées*. Bourgois was a prolific author, whose photonovels had been published in *Antoinette*, *Bonjour Bonheur*, *Capri*, *Confidences Mon Journal*, *Fillette – Jeune Fille*, *Lisette* and *Roman Film complet Chez Nous*. J. Lacombe's photonovel "Geliefde Josiane" published in *Piccolo* was originally in French under the title "Josiane mon amour", published in the French magazine *Super Film*. He was also active for *Mirabelle Film*. In addition to J. Lacombe, there was also a certain Georges Lacombe, who created photonovels for *Ciné-Révélation*. It is possible that J. and Georges were the same person and in that case the Lacombe in question would be a French film director of melodramas. J.P. Blonday had photonovels published in the French magazines *Caprice Film*, *Mirabelle Film*, *Super Film* and *Tentation film*. It is likely that his photonovel published in *Piccolo* in Dutch was originally to be found in one of these magazines. Jean Maxime was an author of photonovels in *Bonjour Bonheur*. In this magazine we can find the francophone original photonovel "Un secret qui se dévoile" that had been translated into Dutch for *Vrouw en Huis* as "Het geweten spreekt". Finally, Jean-Jacques Vierne and Michio Koga were both film directors, the former French and the latter Japanese. Together, they directed the TV mini-series *Vol 272*, which was then turned into a photonovel published in *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*. French actor Jean-Claude Pascal starred as the main protagonist.

Missing from the list is an additional Belgian author of photonovels, namely Jacques Van Melkebeke. The reason for this gap is that he is never directly credited in the photonovels he directed. Van Melkebeke's name does not appear because, having collaborated with the Nazis during World War II, he was officially forbidden from participating in the lively print production and publication world of the postwar period. However, the veto did not stop him completely and he did create photonovels that, in order to avoid legal consequences, he never signed. He worked in fact for the agency Real-Press (from mid-1966 called I.F.S.) as an editor and scenarist, writing and making photonovels. Van Melkebeke directed twenty-two photonovels for Belgian magazines. More specifically, five of them can be found in *Panorama*, in both French and Dutch versions, seven in *Rosita*, in both French and Dutch, and five in *Bonnes Soirées*, then translated into Dutch for *Mimosa*.

This analysis of the authors serves different purposes besides the obvious one of offering an overview of the credited authors and directors in Belgian magazines. First of all, it

discloses new names of authors and directors, and presents names already renowned in the photonovel field or elsewhere. Secondly, moving away from the names, it ties together the different magazines, clearly showing that the same person was not limited to one specific magazine, but could have published photonovels in a variety of magazines. Thirdly it highlights how interconnected the photonovel world was: on an individual scale, it shows how photonovels' authors and directors were often also writers, editors, film-makers, journalists, photographers, etc. and worked for other magazines, newspapers, books, comics, cinema, music and television. On a larger scale, the investigation confirms the existing ties between different photonovel markets, specifically between France and Belgium. Photonovels were not limited by national or linguistic borders, but traveled abroad and were shared among different women's weeklies as an export/import item. Lastly, the analysis of authors reveals how unregulated the production context was. There was no standardized division of roles between directors, authors and scenarists, roles that, as seen above, could be taken up by the same person or by different people, varying not just from one magazine to the other, but also within the same magazine. 'Photonovel maker' was hardly an institutionalized job in Belgium, where many of the photonovels were imported from France or Italy, and most authors worked autonomously, often without clear contracts. The making of photonovels was frequently a temporary job, to earn a bit of money or to get some experience in the production sector, but rarely amounted to a full-time job that was pursued for a number of years. However, it should not surprise then that there was hardly any standardization in the field, or that making photonovels was often a side job, as these were also common elements in Italy and France, only less apparent because of the spread of their production, which allowed them to develop a more regulated working environment.

#### 4.1.4 Photographer

An essential figure in the making of a photonovel was the photographer. He – once again the lack of women is noticeable – was the person who worked most closely with the author of the photonovel, having to create the visual representation of the author's vision. Once the script was available and the author had gathered the crew to create the photonovel, it was time to shoot the images. A photonovel could consist of eighty to 300 photographs.<sup>46</sup> As Jan Baetens pointed out, these photographs were not made to exist independently, but to live in concert with each other, in the larger system of the photonovel.<sup>47</sup>

As noted for the general quality of the photonovel, much varied according to the size and budget of the production. To give a general idea, Serra described three different scenarios. When he worked for *Éditions des Remparts* the budget was extremely low and it was essential to shoot the photonovels in the shortest time possible; therefore, an average of between seventy and eighty photographs a day was a necessity. The photonovels he made for *Parisien Libéré* benefited from a higher budget, lowering the average number of photographs to be shot per day to between forty and fifty. Finally, *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*

requested high quality and could afford a higher-than-average budget that corresponded to about one-tenth of the budget necessary to shoot a film at the time; this allowed Serra to work at a slower pace, shooting twenty to thirty photographs per day.<sup>48</sup>

The following set of pictures (Figures 18, 20, 22 and 24) are an exceptional, yet totally unprogrammed documentary of the shooting of a Serra photonovel, “Les Eaux maléfiques” (Figures 19, 21, 23 and 25). Intrigued by the photographic activity he noticed during a daytrip to Bruges, the Belgian photographer Jean-Marc Bodson took advantage of this chance encounter to photograph some moments of this ‘making of’, without even realizing that the work he was documenting was a photonovel shoot. His unpublished reportage, of which I am showing here some samples, gives a good idea of Serra’s work (we see the photographer, his assistant and Serra himself; other pictures also show the script girl and the project’s secretary).

According to Sánchez Vigil and Olivera Zaldua, the key elements in photonovel photography can be summarized as such: 1) the generally vertical format of the page, together with the careful layout, defined the communicative power of the images; 2) most photographs were portraits that either captured the characters singly or together with other actors and especially in pairs; 3) low and high angles were rare, while medium and American shots were predominant and their consecutive juxtaposition was symptomatic of a monotonous narrative; 4) exterior shots were uncommon and mainly used to clarify a



**Figure 18:** Jean-Marc Bodson, reportage on the shooting of “Les Eaux maléfiques”, 1982  
(© Jean-Marc Bodson). The photographer at work is Jean Lepeltier.





**Figure 19:** Hubert Serra, “Les Eaux maléfiques”, serialized in *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui* between November 11<sup>th</sup> 1982 and March 1<sup>st</sup> 1983; Here: 4<sup>th</sup> page of the 15<sup>th</sup> episode (February 15<sup>th</sup> 1983), p. 77 (© Roularta).



**Figure 20:** Jean-Marc Bodson, reportage on the shooting of “*Les Eaux maléfiques*”, 1982 (© Jean-Marc Bodson). Behind the camera: Hubert Serra.

change of location or subject; 5) the use of details was also limited and functional to making a temporal or spatial change explicit; and 6) the images could be manipulated in order to create specific effects. Although these elements hold true when analyzing the Belgian corpus, I would argue that they need to be distinguished as belonging to different moments in the making of a photonovel, namely the actual shooting and the subsequent layout and composition of the pages. In my analysis I therefore tackle some of these elements in this chapter, while others are analyzed in Chapter 4.1.6, specifically dedicated to the layout.

The methodology adopted by the photographers to shoot the photographs could differ from project to project and person to person.<sup>49</sup> However, it is possible to describe at least two main workflows. The most common one was made of two moments: the shooting on set and the ‘pre-’layout.<sup>50</sup> The shooting on set relied on the script and the description of the scenes. The sets could be indoors or outdoors, more rarely in a professional studio,<sup>51</sup> and often at friends’ homes, making use of existing furniture and props. The actors would take their places on the sets and various scenes would be shot in one day’s work, not necessarily sequentially. Shooting all the photographs took a short time, spanning from one or two days to a maximum of a few weeks for the larger projects. Once this work was done, the ‘pre-’layout could begin. It was in this phase that the photographs could be seen for the first time. Based on the needs of the script, the images would be analyzed and subsequently cut, reframed, resized, tilted, reshuffled, discarded and so on,



**Figure 21:** Hubert Serra, “Les Eaux maléfiques”, in *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui*, 3<sup>rd</sup> page of the 14<sup>th</sup> episode (February 8<sup>th</sup> 1983), p. 86 (© Roularta).



**Figure 22:** Jean-Marc Bodson, reportage on the shooting of “Les Eaux maléfiques”, 1982  
(© Jean-Marc Bodson).

in order to give life to the best shots needed for the photonovel. It was at this point that it became possible to edit or entirely modify the priorities established during the shooting phase: photographs with their places changed, reframed, tilted or resized would acquire new meaning and alter their emotional and narratological charge.<sup>52</sup> This methodology could be expressed in a more or less professionalized way. The script, as seen above, could be more or less specific and thus describe not only the scenes in detail, but also the photographs to be taken. On the other hand, a ‘wilder’ approach would rely more on the ‘pre-’layout phase, where the photographs shot in an unruly fashion would then be reworked and put together to create the narrative.<sup>53</sup>

A different methodology was the one adopted, for example, for the photonovels directed by Hubert Serra. The peculiarity of this approach was that the shooting phase needed to deliver the expected results straightaway. To this end, the director would work closely with a photographer who shared similar esthetic values. The script and storyboard would need to describe in detail the scenes and sets, often with meticulous sketches of how the director envisioned the photographs. Once on set, the photographer worked first with an instant camera in order to immediately be able see whether the results matched the expectations and needs. Then, having verified that the lighting, props, postures, clothes and expressions were correct, the photographer proceeded to shoot the photonovel photographs.<sup>54</sup>



**Figure 23:** Hubert Serra, “Les Eaux maléfiques”, serialized in *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui* between November 11<sup>th</sup> 1982 and March 1<sup>st</sup> 1983. Here: 3<sup>rd</sup> page of the 4<sup>th</sup> episode (November 11<sup>th</sup> 1982), p. 80 (© Roularta).



**Figure 24:** Jean-Marc Bodson, reportage on the shooting of “Les Eaux maléfiques”, 1982  
(© Jean-Marc Bodson).

The second way of working was more professionalized and required more time, material and preparation, supported by a larger availability of funds. In the majority of cases, however, the photographers of photonovels could not make use of the full potential of photography: the images were shot to elicit an emotional response, but due to time and budget constraints easy solutions were often preferred to complex and more dramatic compositions.<sup>55</sup> However, the fast-paced shooting and lighting gear used to take the photographs not only produced interesting results, but predated by a few years the innovative way of shooting typical of Nouvelle Vague films and worked as an exceptional learning platform for photographers. Raoul Coutard, for example, is renowned for having shot the film *À bout de souffle* directed by Jean-Luc Godard, as well as many other Nouvelle Vague films. Prior to this, he worked as a photonovel photographer. “His image apprenticeship, in the French army, at the Institut Géographique National (IGN), as well as in the production of *romans-photos*, prepared him for filming quickly, with light material, and with different genres in mind that could be lightly and playfully interwoven.”<sup>56</sup> The time and budget constraints in the photonovel production were thus, in some cases, taken as a creative challenge that encouraged photographers to come up with flexible and innovative solutions. While, on the one hand, the full potential of photography might not be reached, on the other hand, certain limits of photography were nonetheless extended into uncharted territories.



**Figure 25:** Hubert Serra, “Les Eaux maléfiques”, serialized in *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui* between November 11<sup>th</sup> 1982 and March 1<sup>st</sup> 1983. Here: 6<sup>th</sup> page of the 7<sup>th</sup> episode (December 21<sup>st</sup> 1982), p. 71 (© Roularta).

As Sullerot noticed in 1966, cinema played an essential role in defining and structuring the reading of photographs and sequential images. This certainly affected the creation of the images for the photonovel, in addition to their esthetics. However, the way the photonovel was built up through the visual elements differed from cinematic practice. Photonovel images were generally face-on photographs, taken at eye level. The angle of the camera was thus mainly neutral, offering the reader a direct and uncharged view of the characters, although the characters themselves (almost) never looked directly in the camera. High- and low-angle shots were rare and their usage seems to highlight an attempt at creating dramatic effects.<sup>57</sup> Subjective and point-of-view shots were rarely chosen, with a preference for a linear narrative shot *super partes*, aiming at exposing and explaining all actions and events.<sup>58</sup> The field size of the shots generally preferred close-ups to long shots. Wide shots were rare, often only appearing at the beginning of a photonovel as an establishing shot, to show the environment in which the next scenes would take place; this kind of shot could appear again if the characters moved to a new environment, in order to create a visual separation between sequences. More typically used in photonovels were the following shots, here discussed in order of camera proximity to the subject, from closer to further away:

- Extreme close-up shot. It captured only a detail of the character's face, such as the eyes. It could also focus on an important object, such as a letter or a note essential for the development of the story.
- Close-up shot. Taken in close proximity to the actor, this shot captured their head and shoulder line. It was especially used to focus on the emotional charge of the scene, clearly visible on the character's face.
- Medium close-up shot and medium shot. Taken further away from the actor, these shots included more of the upper body of the character, up to their waist in the medium shot. They were commonly adopted to capture emotions in combination with (upper) body postures and language, such as the position of the character's hands (on the cheek, on the throat, on the heart, clasped, etc.).
- American shot (*plan Américain*). This shot allowed the photographer to capture a portion of the background, while keeping the focus on the actors, who were here depicted up to their thighs or even knees. It was often used to portray a dialogue scene without moving from one character to the other. In this shot the characters are commonly not at the same distance from the camera, but tend to be a step forward or backward in order to create a dynamic ensemble.
- Italian shot. Capturing the character up to the knees, this shot was often used for scenes captured outdoors as it allowed a clearer view of the background.
- Full shot. The full body is in the frame. This shot was adopted to bring attention to the action within the scene. It could also be used to make the dynamics between actors explicit, for example capturing them closer to each other to give an impression of love or dislike between them.<sup>59</sup>



The vast majority of photonovels were shot indoors. The scenes could be shot in specially chosen places that featured a specific interior – in a castle for a historical photonovel, for example – but also, in a more improvised fashion, at the homes of friends or family. Studios dedicated to photonovels, as there were for cinema, were rarely a reality. Depending on the production of the photonovel, the shooting could also take place abroad. In this case the crew – consisting of the author of the photonovel, the photographer and, when present, assistants, a make-up artist, hairstylist, stylist and head of wardrobe – would travel to the chosen location, where arrangements had been made prior to their arrival. The actors would follow according to when they were needed for specific scenes. This meant that scenes with the same actors would be bundled together and shot in one or consecutive days, disregarding the narrative and the sequences of the photonovel.<sup>60</sup> Once again according to the budget, the shooting could last a variable amount of time, spanning from a few days to a few weeks.

Peculiar to photonovels was the almost constant presence of people in the shots. Photographs of landscapes or objects were rare and made an appearance only if strictly necessary for the development of the narrative.<sup>61</sup> The story revolved around the characters and these were present in the large majority of the images.<sup>62</sup> The human body was thus the real protagonist of the photographs. It is possible to discern a certain iconography. The way the characters were portrayed, the composition of the scenes, the focus on certain details all concurred in the creation of iconic images and moments – such as the kiss or embrace, talking on the phone, or sitting in the car – that recurred throughout photonovels and established a uniform esthetic. Typical of this esthetic was the static nature of the characters, who were not captured acting and moving in the space of the scene, but in a crystalized moment. The shot, therefore, not only needed to convey the emotional charge of the scene, but also to hint at a certain action: the image was static and yet vibrant. As noted by Pedro Sempere, “the photographs, more than having a narrative function with respect to the story, have an iconic or cognitive function.”<sup>63</sup> Also typical of the photonovel esthetic was the focus on faces and particularly on the eyes. The mouth, on the other hand, needed to be closed or only slightly open and could be portrayed as open in a scream only in the rare cases of scenes of extreme terror. As Turzio, among others, suggests, this is a paradox of the photonovel, which is narratively extremely loquacious, but did not allow the characters to express that loquaciousness by actually portraying the act of talking in the photographs.<sup>64</sup> The very nature of photonovels was a collaboration between text and images and thus captions and speech balloons were essential here, as they put into words what the image did not or could not capture. This meant that while shooting the photographs, the photographers needed to be aware of the balance between filled and empty spaces in the composition not just from a photographic point of view, but also in a photonovel dynamic, where the empty spaces would be filled with speech balloons and captions.<sup>65</sup> The skillful composition of the sequences also contributed to achieving a sense of general dynamism.



**Figure 26:** Example of dialoguing characters. Note how they do not face each other and their lips are sealed. Readers know they are talking to each other only thanks to the speech balloons. “L’autre Annabelle”, *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui*, December 16<sup>th</sup> 1965 (© Roularta).

If we take a look, for example, at the way dialoguing characters were captured, it is possible to notice the recurrence of specific iconic shots. One of the most common ones captured the two talking characters face-on. One is closer to the camera and looks off-screen, generally at a focus point slightly higher than the camera; the other is a step back and either looks at the first character or, more rarely, off-screen or elsewhere in the scene (his/her hands, an object in the scene, etc.). Both characters are portrayed either with their mouths closed or only slightly apart. The peculiarity of this shot is that the characters, although talking to each other, never meet each other’s eyes: while the first character’s gaze is fixed off-screen, the second character, when captured looking at the first character, is looking at the back of the character’s head (Figure 26). Another technique, borrowed from cinema, that was used in photonovels to capture dialoguing characters was that of the shot and reverse shot. First, one character would be photographed while talking to another

character, often off-screen. Mouth closed or vaguely open, it was the speech balloon that identified the character as speaking. Then the camera would move on to the second character and take the reverse shot. The result was two images where the characters looked in different directions, creating the impression of looking at each other. The aim of shot and reverse shot was not only to capture a dialogue, but also to indicate the change in interlocutor. As Bernardes Habert notices, in photonovels it was often the placement of the speech balloons that was essential to give the order in which people spoke. This kind of shooting was therefore often not necessary to understand the dialogue and dynamics between the two characters, but was nonetheless chosen to create dynamicity in the photographs.<sup>66</sup>

The monopolizing presence of the human body in photonovel photographs, often in a static fashion, had an impact on the way sequentiality and temporality was built in these stories. This will be discussed below in Chapter 4.1.6, when analyzing the layout process.

The vast majority of photographs for photonovels were in black and white. Although color photography already existed, women's weeklies of the 1950s and 1960s were usually printed almost entirely in black and white. Colors were preferred only for a few pages, often for advertisements. Printing in color was in fact expensive and required a technology that would be perfected and commercially applied only towards the end of the 1960s, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.2. For the art photographers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the possibility to go from black and white to color went hand in hand with a change in the esthetics of photography:

*Polychrome worlds are radiant and genial. They easily imply atmosphere and suggest immediate access to that place with its weather. Few photographers were so untroubled or readily satisfied by the glowing surfaces of things. Monochrome promised insights, visions of reality purified; or it allowed photographers freedom from the contradictory richness of full colour, and a means towards emphasis and control – advantages not lightly sacrificed.<sup>67</sup>*

However, in the world of popular magazines and photonovels, when this change occurred a few years later, it was perceived as a natural next step, to keep up with the editorial changes of the time. This reflects the fact that shooting photographs for photonovels was a different matter than art photography. Photographers working for photonovels were often also art photographers and yet the two disciplines clearly had different aims and needs. There certainly were points of contact between the two – the search for a certain esthetic, the style of the specific photographer, to name two – but it was clear that photography for photonovels was one element of a whole that answered to a different set of requirements and expectations. Photonovels followed not a photographic but an editorial logic. To keep pace with the time and the readers' expectations, photonovels had to switch to color when that became the editorial norm. The iconic photographs, the specific compositions and the dynamics between characters and scenes remained the same. Color

was rather perceived as a necessary step, if not even a new, interesting challenge that could enhance the emotional charge and overall quality of the images. Colors were in fact often not used haphazardly. Photonovel photographs in colors aimed at capturing ‘dream’ colors, as Chirollet notices in his work on the esthetics of photonovels. These colors were usually pastel, never too bright, favoring misty tints and diaphanous luminosity.<sup>68</sup> An author that consciously played with the possibilities given by colors was Hubert Serra. When shooting in color, he would often use colored filters in order to create a specific atmosphere and prompt different emotional responses. So a blue filter would, for example, give a melancholic, nostalgic or even mysterious effect, while a red filter would be used to express passion, struggle and at times fear.<sup>69</sup>

When looking at the photonovels in color belonging to the Belgian corpus it is possible to notice that some defied Chirollet’s esthetic analysis and presented bright, intense and saturated colors. This had possibly to do with two different factors. First of all, as seen above, the rotogravure production determined the quality of the result. If the budget was low or the general interest in producing a quality photonovel was lacking, poorer photographs were a direct consequence of this. The colors were then not thought through and were not used to signify a specific atmosphere, as much as the story lacked originality. Secondly, it should be considered that there were visible differences between the photographs that were taken and the printed photonovels. Printing entailed a series of steps that impacted directly the general quality of the photonovel images and of the colors captured, as we will see in Chapter 4.2.4.

### ***Cameras and photographic gear***

It was not only the printing technology that had an impact on the final photonovel. It was, in the first place, the photographic technology available at the time of shooting that determined the photographic result. Unlike the cameras we know today, at the time when photonovels were shot the available cameras were analogue.

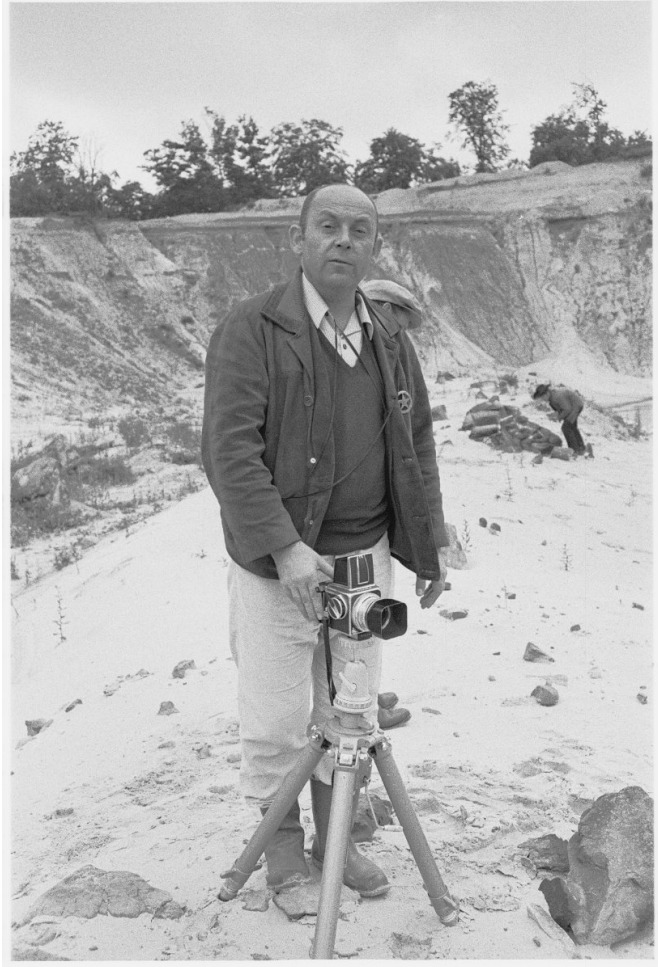
Sources on photonovels rarely focus on the more material and technical aspects, although these were at the heart of the making of a photonovel. It is thanks to our interviews with Richard Olivier and Michel Courant, and to Serra’s autobiography, that it is possible to make a sketch of the cameras and technology used. The three camera brands mentioned were Rolleiflex, Hasselblad and Pentax. These are world-renowned brands and in the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s and 1970s produced a large number of cameras, both for professional and recreational use, each with improved features. These cameras were state-of-the-art and introduced innovations to the photography field at a fast pace. It was in fact in these years that photography became more and more established as a serious medium, shown by the foundation of Magnum Photos in 1947 and the developments in commercial printing that made the work of photographers available to a large and new audience.<sup>70</sup> With each new camera, Rolleiflex, Hasselblad and Pentax competed to integrate the latest



**Figure 27:** Assistant photographer Pierre Richer, captured while changing the lens of the Hasselblad camera. On the back side of the camera a magazine for Polaroid film is mounted. Private collection Michel Courant.

advancements in photographic technology into their models: interchangeable film magazines, interchangeable lenses, automated features such as an automated film-loading mechanism, a built-in light meter, availability of multiple exposures and so on. These cameras could be used on a tripod, but also hand-held. This was particularly important for the shooting of photonovels, which needed to be fast and flexible and did not allow for bulky photographic gear.

Hubert Serra's photonovels were initially shot with Rolleiflex cameras. However, the technological innovations made Hasselblad cameras more interesting for Serra's aims (Figures 27 and 28). In particular, the introduction of the Hasselblad 500C series in 1957 revolutionized the field. With a leaf shutter placed in the lenses instead of a focal plane shutter in the camera body, these cameras allowed for interchangeable lenses, film magazines and viewfinders.<sup>71</sup> In Serra's words, "what was better [in this camera] in comparison with the others was that it was possible to add an engine, special chargers, numerous lenses, view finders, and above all that it was possible to attach to it a Polaroid."<sup>72</sup> The possibility to change film magazines allowed in fact for Polaroid film to be mounted on the camera. This film produced instant photographs, used as an aid for the photographer to adjust lighting settings and exposures, and necessary to check the composition before taking the final photograph.



**Figure 28:** Photographer Serge Berton sporting a Hasselblad camera on the set of one of Hubert Serra’s photonovels. Private collection of Michel Courant.

When shooting photonovels, in addition to the camera (and lenses), there needed to be a number of specific items essential for the photographer and for the operation of the camera. First of all, the film.<sup>73</sup> As seen above, analogue cameras worked with a film that made it possible to take a predefined number of photographs. As well as representing a cost that needed to be covered by the budget for the production of the photonovel,<sup>74</sup> it also defined much of the resulting image. This film was in fact coated with a light-sensitive layer of gelatin composed of silver halide crystals: “[e]xposure to light in a camera produces an invisible change yielding a latent image, distinguishable from unexposed silver halide only by its ability to be reduced to metallic silver by certain developing agents.”<sup>75</sup>

Different films were coated with different emulsions, which absorbed the colored light differently,<sup>76</sup> and had different sensitivity or speed. This determined the amount of light the film reacted to and was measured on the ASA scale (what we today call ISO). In digital cameras the ISO values can be modified depending on the luminance of the subject and the lighting of the scene; to put it simply, a lower ISO works well for well-lit scenes or sunny outdoor locations, while a higher one is needed for cloudy days, indoor locations, and nighttime. The ISO value has to be matched with the shutter time and diaphragm in order to allow a certain amount of light to enter the camera and create a well exposed image. As film had a specific speed, different kinds of film would achieve different aims. Once the film was loaded in the camera, the photographer could only control the shutter time and diaphragm in order to achieve the right exposure. Other important characteristics of the film were the graininess, which could be higher or lower depending on the size of the silver halide crystals, but was in any case always present because the structure of the image was discontinuous; the resolving power, which referred to the fineness of the details the film could capture; and the contrast, which translated tonal differences as greater or smaller density differences in the image depending on whether the film was high, medium or low contrast.<sup>77</sup> According to Anelli et al., films with low speed and graininess were preferred.<sup>78</sup> The images that were taken were latent, meaning that they could not be seen until after they were developed. On set it was thus not possible to check the images shot, which necessarily needed to be taken as perfectly as possible as the budget did not allow for reshooting. The viewing of the images had to wait until they were developed and was at the heart of the layout process.

A second necessary tool for the photographer was a light (or exposure) meter.<sup>79</sup> The luminance and lighting of the subject was, according to Serra, one of the most difficult aspects a photonovel photographer had to deal with.<sup>80</sup> While modern cameras have a light meter that can “measure the subject luminance and set the shutter or the lens diaphragm to yield a correctly exposed image”,<sup>81</sup> this was mostly not the case for the cameras used to shoot early photonovels. Photographers needed an external tool that would measure the luminance, a light (or exposure) meter. This would measure the amount of light in a scene and determine the shutter speed and aperture needed to achieve the best exposure. The measurement also took into consideration the film speed. The photographer was not bound to follow the exposure suggestion and could play with the light and settings in order to create a lighter or darker image according to the needs.

In order to deal with the lighting situation in the best possible way, alongside a light meter, photographers often made use of additional lights and one or more flash units and reflectors (Figures 29, 30, 31).<sup>82</sup> The lighting of a scene determined the light effects on the subject. Depending on where the lighting was placed, flattening effects (with light from behind the camera), depth and modeling (with light from the side), dramatic effects and high contrast (with light from behind the subject) could be obtained.<sup>83</sup> With tungsten

lights and flash units the photographer could achieve great flexibility in the effects he wanted to create.<sup>84</sup> An example of these units is given by Serra in his autobiography, where he mentions the usage of Braun and Balcar flash units with one or two lights.<sup>85</sup> It should be noted that, while lightning could determine the contrast and brilliance of an image, excessive contrast would result in difficulty with the exposure settings and, as a consequence, an image that presented loss of details in the highlights or shadows.<sup>86</sup> The ability to use lighting to enhance the image clearly distinguished the quality of some photonovels from others.



**Figure 29:** Michel Courant, assistant on the set of Serra's photonovels, carries two Balcar flash units. Private collection Michel Courant.



**Figure 30:** Flash units and reflectors were used also outdoors in order to manage the highlights and shadows on the subject. Private collection Michel Courant.





Encore Caroline et son air boudeur...  
Francis, je t'en prie! Si tu m'aimes,  
tu ne peux pas me faire ça...

Bon, bon, je verrai à m'arranger.  
Et maintenant, adieu.

**Figure 31:** The resulting photograph of the moment captured in Figure 30. Note how the light illuminates the girl's face, which, without the use of a flash, would have been in shadow ("Jenny du tonnerre", *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*, January 14<sup>th</sup> 1970) (© Roularta).

Lastly, filters could be used to “modify the way in which a film records colors as monochrome tone values.”<sup>87</sup> They were colored disks to be mounted on the lens.<sup>88</sup> The way they worked was to filter out light of other colors while preferring light of the color of the filters. This gave as a result a specific greyscale. Red and green objects, for example, translated into two similar shades of gray when of similar brightness. By using a red filter, the green light would be held back while the red light would be easily transmitted, thus giving an image in which the green object would be of a darker gray, while the red one would be lighter, allowing the photographer to better differentiate between grey values.<sup>89</sup> Filters could also be used once color photography became the norm for photonovels. In this case, they worked exactly in the same way, with the only difference that the film would record colors instead of grey values. They were often adopted by the photographers working with Serra in order to give a certain color to the scene and evoke a specific atmosphere.

### *Photographers in the Belgian corpus*

Similarly to what has been done for the authors of photonovels, table 3 lists the photographers credited in the Belgian corpus. As photographers are never mentioned alone in the credits, but always together with an author of the photonovel, the data has been organized into three columns: the first column gives the names of the authors of the photonovels in alphabetical order, with each author selected to be listed in this table because his/her name appears in the credits next to a photographer; the second column lists the photographers; the third column gives the number of photonovels shot by the photographer for the given author. This means that the photographers are clustered around the authors and can therefore appear more than once in the table. This not only to highlight the photographers who recurrently worked with a given author, but also to show that the same photographers could work for different photonovel productions. Only thirty-two photographers are credited in the corpus. Counted all together, the photonovels that provide credits for the photographer number 249, meaning that this information is missing in 355 cases. Like for the table about the authors, the number of photonovels shot does not make a distinction between original photonovels, imported works and translations, which are thus all counted as separate photonovels. In addition, the number of photonovels shot by a photographer refers only to the data present in the Belgian corpus. This means that it is possible that said photographer shot more photonovels that are however not part of the Belgian corpus and therefore not counted in the list below.

Author	Photographer	No. of photonovels
Bernard Keller	Alex Quinio	2
	Georges Papo	21
	Studio Iskender	1
	J.-P. Allegri	4
	Jean Guyaux	1
	Jean Petit	2
	Jean-Paul Alphen	8
E. Verzar	E. Verzar	2
Edith Kiel	R. Reusens	1
G. Serra	J. Maisonneuf	1
Hubert Serra	Claude Cayré	33
	G. Liron	2
	J. Lugo	2
	J. Vauclair	3
	Jean Lepeltier	80
	Krip – Lasalle	1
	Raoul Coutard	2
	Raymond Cauchetier	14
	Serge Berton	45
J.J. Bourgois	J. Lepeltier	1
J.P. Blonday	J. Lugo	1
Jacques Simonnet	Georges Lienhard	4
	Maurice Crespi	4
Jean Maxime	Jacques Jollet	1
Jean-Claude Pascal	Jean-Paul Alphen	2
Pal Lukacs	L. Lukacs	1
	Micky	1
Penny Els	Jean-Marie Blanckaert	3
	Lou Demeyere	1
	Louis-Philippe Breydel	3
	Marcel Van Landeghem	1
Richard Olivier and Gérard Frydman	Jacques Jacob	1

**Table 3:** Table of photographers of photonovels. The photographers are given in the second column. On the right is the number of photonovels they have shot and on the left the author of these photonovels.

For the two most productive authors of photonovels in the Belgian corpus, Hubert Serra and Bernard Keller, there are respectively nine and seven photographers mentioned. Through Serra's autobiography, we know that the photographers he worked with were Frenchmen, often friends met during the war in Indochina, who had started careers in the editorial world as photographers for magazines and newspapers and often aimed at becoming (or already were) art or documentary photographers. Photographers were usually not as invested in the photonovel project as the author, and were thus hired for the individual productions. In addition to working on the creation of a photonovel, they would continue to perform other jobs, mostly of a photographic sort. The collaboration with Serra on the set of photonovels – and this holds true for any photonovel photographer – allowed the photographers to practice a form of photography that relied on a fast-paced, flexible and often challenging photo shooting, thus refining a skillset that could be applied to their other photographic works. The photographer who collaborated most often with Serra was Jean Lepeltier, with a total of eighty photonovels shot. Lepeltier had worked at the photographic studio Harcourt, in Paris, renowned for beautiful black-and-white shots of celebrities and movie stars. His first steps into the world of photonovels were as a photographer for J.J. Bourgois, and in fact we can see in the list that he did photograph the one photonovel in the corpus directed by Bourgois. According to Serra, their collaboration on the set of photonovels was so fruitful because of Lepeltier's sensitivity, attention to detail and perfectionism, which pushed him to go beyond easy solutions in favor of searching for the perfect shot and material.<sup>90</sup> Lepeltier worked with Serra from 1971 until 1985, shooting almost all of the photonovels published in these years in *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw*.

With forty-five photonovels shot for Serra, Serge Berton is the second most prolific collaborator of the French author. As an independent photographer, he had extensive photographic experience that spanned from landscapes, to still life, to portraits, to paparazzi photographs. This diverse background and his "skeptical but realistic gaze" made him an excellent photographer of photonovels.<sup>91</sup> Berton worked with Serra on and off for almost ten years, from 1964 to 1973. Around the same years, from 1962 to 1970, another photographer appears regularly in the credits of Serra's photonovels, namely Claude Cayré. Cayré worked for *France Dimanche*, a gossip weekly dedicated to celebrity news. For the magazine Cayré was effectively a paparazzo. Rather than being a negative aspect, this meant that he could work fast and was flexible, patient and resourceful, all good qualities for a photonovel photographer.<sup>92</sup>

Raymond Cauchetier follows with fourteen photonovels shot for Serra, with whom he worked from the late 1950s until about 1965. A self-taught war photographer in Indochina, once Cauchetier came back to France he got in contact with Serra and worked on his photonovels, while looking to establish himself as a professional photographer. It is in these same years that he met Jean-Luc Godard, allegedly through Serra, and started

working as a set photographer on many films of the Nouvelle Vague. Another photographer who worked both with Serra and Godard was Raoul Coutard. Serra reflects in his autobiography on Coutard's ability to obtain striking lighting effects in a period when lighting posed a considerable technical challenge.<sup>93</sup> Credited together with Serra for only a few photonovels was Georges Liron, a war photographer who later collaborated with Raoul Coutard on his films. It is interesting to notice how these photographers knew each other and worked together. As noted when describing the authors of photonovels, this is a typical aspect of the photonovel world: it was not only a small world where authors, photographers and actors knew each other and often collaborated, but a world that overlapped with other realms, such as the publishing industry and cinema.

The last three photographers on the list credited alongside Serra were Jean Lugo, Jacques Vauclair and Krip – Lasalle. While the latter remains a mysterious figure, more information is known for the former two. Jean Lugo had been a war photographer in Indochina. As with Cauchetier and Coutard, once back in France, Lugo became acquainted with Serra. He worked not only with Serra for a few photonovels in the early 1960s, but is also credited as the photographer of J.P. Blonday's photonovel. Lugo then moved on to work once again as a war photographer and reporter for the ORTF, the Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française. Jacques Vauclair worked with Serra in the early 1960s. He was a renowned portrait photographer who first worked at the studio Harcourt, already mentioned as the studio Lepeltier also worked for, and then opened his own studio where he specialized in portraits of celebrities.

On the photographers who worked with Bernard Keller there is little information to be found. Georges Papo shot twenty-one photonovels throughout the 1960s, in addition to portraits of the artist Louis Toffoli and film stills. Iskender refers not to a person, but to a photographic studio. The photonovel was in fact an adaptation of an operetta, the photographs used coming from images shot during the performance itself. Jean-Paul Alphen was a cinematographer who worked with French film directors Jean Vigo and Jean Renoir. For Keller he shot eight photonovels between 1955 and 1957, while he also worked with Jean-Claude Pascal in 1957. Alex Quinio was a photographer particularly remembered for his iconic shots of Brigitte Bardot. Jean Guyaux was a renowned Belgian press photographer, with works that spanned from iconic portraits of Jacques Brel to images of current events. J.-P. Allegri and Jean Petit remain a mystery.

Concerning the rest of the photographers listed above, even less is known. The only ones we could find some information about are the following. E. Verzar was both a director and photographer of photonovels, as well as a layout artist. Rudi Reusens was the photographer who took the film stills used to create the photonovel adaptation de "Boevenprinces", which, as seen above, was in fact a film-photonovel; he was a Belgian TV pioneer who worked for many years for the BRT, the Belgische Radio- en Televisieomroep. The four photographers who worked with Penny Els on the photonovels published

in *Joepie* were Jean-Marie Blanckaert, the brother of Will Tura, Louis-Philippe Breydel, Lou Demeyere and Marcel Van Landeghem, all working at the time as photographers for bands and singers. On L. Lukacs and Micky very little is known, but considering that they are mentioned alongside the author Pal Lukacs, it is likely that they belonged to the crew of Poles working for Real Presse. As for all the other photographers, they unfortunately at the moment remain only names on a list. The lack of information to be found on these people highlights a phenomenon common when studying photonovels in general and the Belgian corpus in particular. Working for a photonovel production was more generally not governed by strict rules and contracts; as we have seen for the photographers here analyzed, their work was not just limited to photonovels, but they were always also active elsewhere, be it for other magazines, newspapers, photographic studios, television, cinema or something else entirely. It is then not unusual that some of the people mentioned in the credits of photonovels were photographers for only a few weeks or years and afterwards moved on to other domains and activities, making them virtually impossible to find today. It was also normal to work in an unorganized and more flexible context than what we know today, where not only were contracts not required, but nor were experience or recognition. Coupled with the fact that we are studying a phenomenon long gone, the impossibility to find precise data on these people is an unfortunate and frustrating aspect, but also an unavoidable one.

#### 4.1.5 Actors

As the human body was the protagonist of the photographs, actors were carefully chosen to portray the characters best. There were usually two or three main characters, typically two women and a man or two men and a woman. The majority of the photonovel photographs revolved around them. They were often flanked by secondary characters, who would make an appearance in some photographs and sequences of the story, but the total number of characters would rarely be more than seven.<sup>94</sup> Depending on the scope of the production, the actors could be celebrities, movie stars, professionals or regular people selected for the role. Once the script was in place, the author of the photonovel would cast the actors according to the specific characters he had in mind. It was common practice to try and get celebrities to act as protagonists of photonovels, resulting in an increase in interest and sales of the magazine. This was however made difficult by the budget, which could not compare to that of cinema, and it often resulted in the impossibility to pay the salary famous actors required. On the contrary, semi-famous or aspiring actors, singers and theater actors would often be available to appear in photonovels, which they saw as a platform to get seen and obtain recognition.<sup>95</sup>

An ordinary way to search for the new actors and actresses of photonovels was to look among the readers of the magazines that published these stories. This was usually organized in collaboration with the redaction of the magazine, which would publish an

article detailing the search for new actors and the application procedure (Figure 32). The application largely resembled one for a modeling job and generally required readers to send portrait and full-body images of themselves. The search could then either stop here, as the redaction sorted through the various candidates, or involve readers once again, this time presenting them with a preselection of the applicants and asking them to vote for their favorites. This sort of tight interaction with readers was typical of women's weeklies and helped strengthen the image of the magazine as a trusted friend and advisor.

In addition to searching for actors among celebrities or magazine readers, there were two other common possibilities. When there was a budget to pay professional actors, the author would often contact agencies that represented actors and models, and work with them for the casting and selection of actors and actresses. When the budget was lacking, it was not uncommon to go look for improvised actors among family, friends and acquaintances. Additionally, in the years of the greatest popularity of photonovels, many young people would voluntarily approach the redactions of magazines and propose themselves as actors for photonovels. As Saint-Michel notices, the photonovel recalled cinema and raised the same vocations: to play a role in one, to become famous, to pursue an acting career.<sup>96</sup>

In cinema, television or theater, acting automatically involves movement and sound. It is the variation of the facial expressions, the changing of positions, the shifts in the body, the movement through space, the ability to deliver a line, the music and soundtrack that convey the pathos and make for a good performance. In the span of a sentence, actors move through different expressions.<sup>97</sup> Photonovels, however, consisted of a sequence of photographs where the actors were captured in a crystalized moment. Acting then acquired a very different meaning: it was not in the fluency of speech or body movements that actors needed to excel, but in the ability to freeze in space and hold an expression for the timespan of one or more shots.<sup>98</sup> Actors were not asked to play and recite, but to interpret a series of clear expressions. A neutral face, a faraway gaze and a certain fixity were highly in demand, as they could easily convey an impression of internal struggles and secrets.<sup>99</sup> For this reason, many authors employed not actors to portray their characters but models. While the former often struggled to find a balance in their expressions and avoid overdoing it, the latter were used to posing in front of a camera while governing their bodies into keeping set poses and expressions.<sup>100</sup> For this same reason authors could search for actors and actresses from among the readers of the magazine or their circle of friends: acting experience was not required as it was not so essential to the successful outcome of the photonovel.

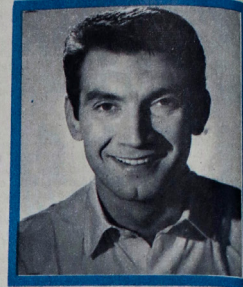
While acting was not essential, physical appearance and photogenic quality were.<sup>101</sup> The actors of photonovels were chosen for their looks. It has been noted that people made up most of the photonovel images. The human body was, however, not captured in all its many and different facets, but rather esthetically valorized according to Western ideals of beauty and physiognomy of the time, incarnated by the selected actors who were always

# Voulez-vous tourner avec moi ?

Pour la seconde fois, « Lectures d'Aujourd'hui » organise un concours qui lui permettra peut-être de révéler un nouveau talent.

Marie-José Nat, la délicieuse interprète de « La Rue des Prairies » et de quantité d'autres grands films a été découverte parmi les lectrices qui avaient participé à un concours similaire organisé en 1955. C'est ainsi qu'elle fut choisie pour être la partenaire de Jean-Claude Pascal dans un de nos grands romans-films. Dès lors, l'inconnue était lancée.

Aujourd'hui, nous vous proposons de tourner un film aux côtés de Félix Marten, grande vedette internationale et homme sympathique et séduisant dont rêvent beaucoup de jeunes filles. (Voir reportage de Bernard Keller dans Lectures d'Aujourd'hui n° 394.)



**Voulez-vous être la partenaire de Félix Marten dans un roman-film tourné par nous et qui sera publié dans notre journal ?**

Voulez-vous passer 15 jours sur les lieux du tournage en compagnie de l'équipe de « Lectures d'Aujourd'hui » ? Vous pourrez être accompagnées par un membre de votre famille qui sera également reçu à nos frais pendant ces quinze jours.  
Voulez-vous être habillée par Pierre Billet et maquillée et coiffée par Caritta ?

## ALORS PARTICIPEZ A NOTRE GRAND CONCOURS

### Ce qu'il faut faire

- 1) Découper soigneusement les bons de participation 1, 2, 3, 4 qui paraissent dans les n° 395, 396, 397 et 398 du journal et les coller sur le questionnaire que vous trouverez dans le n° 398.
- 2) Remplir le questionnaire qui se trouvera dans le n° 398.
- 3) Nous envoyer avec le questionnaire, deux photos de vous, format carte postale. Une photo en pied, une autre en buste (marquer nom et adresse au dos de ces photos).
- 4) Nous envoyer le tout avant le 30 avril 1960 à « Lectures d'Aujourd'hui », Concours « Voulez-vous tourner avec moi ? », 65, rue de Hennin - Bruxelles 5.

### Comment serez-vous élue ?

- 1) « Lectures d'Aujourd'hui » opérera une première sélection parmi les envois.
- 2) Le choix sera soumis à l'avis d'un jury — composé de : Huguette Defosse, directrice de « Lectures d'Aujourd'hui », Marianne Andrau, Judith Paley, André Claveau, Maurice Colinon, Michel Droit, Bernard Keller et Félix Marten — qui sélectionnera dix concurrentes.
- 3) Les dix concurrentes seront convoquées à Paris. Elles pourront être accompagnées d'un membre de leur famille. (Voyage et frais de séjour offerts par « Lectures d'Aujourd'hui ».)  
Le jury les départagera. Un grand reportage photographique sera consacré à cet événement.
- 4) Une lauréate sera choisie, mais les autres concurrentes pourront éventuellement être pressenties pour des rôles secondaires dans le roman-film.
- 5) La lauréate et un membre de sa famille séjourneront quinze jours sur les lieux de tournage aux frais de « Lectures d'Aujourd'hui ».
- 6) La date du tournage a été fixée du 15 juillet au 30 juillet 1960 (sous toute réserve).
- 7) Nous demandons aux concurrentes mineures de faire figurer sur le questionnaire l'autorisation de leurs parents.
- 8) La décision du jury sera sans appel. Tous les droits relatifs au roman-film restent la propriété pleine et entière de « Lectures d'Aujourd'hui ».
- 9) Les photos des participantes ne seront pas renvoyées.



Nous avons la joie d'offrir, à toute lectrice ayant participé à notre concours et renvoyé le questionnaire complet, une photo dédiée de Félix Marten.

Figure 32: Contest “Voulez-vous tourner avec moi?” for the next actress of photonovels announced by Bernard Keller, author of photonovels, and published by *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* on April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1960. The winner was announced on June 18<sup>th</sup> 1960 and was not one, but two young women, readers of the magazine, Christiane Deherve and Evelyne Walther.



white and European. They were young,<sup>102</sup> their faces symmetrical, with big eyes, small noses, soft mouths for women, defined eyebrows for men, and coiffed hair; their bodies were lithe, sensual and toned.<sup>103</sup> The ideal of beauty representing goodness of heart was a recurring element of photonovels: only the antagonists presented physical imperfections.<sup>104</sup> As Chirollet points out, the fascination for canonically beautiful faces was not only typical of photonovels, but could be found across the popular media of the time: cinema, magazines, posters. When reading photonovels and looking at the photographs, readers were reminded of the images they saw daily on the covers of magazines, on the television, in advertisements and posters for films, and in advertisements for a broad variety of products.<sup>105</sup> As seen in Chapter 1, photonovels were tightly embedded in the socio-cultural context of the time and as such furthered ideals and portrayed models that rarely deviated from the perceived norm.

In addition to this idea of beauty there was also one of timelessness. The characters tended to be ageless and only the text gave the readers the necessary information on this regard, if deemed essential to the story. The characters were generally young, but even as the story developed and time passed, they never changed and never aged, being fixed in their perfect bodies. What probably began as an expedient of the production to cut costs for more actors eventually became the norm: the characters never aged, not even the children. It was, once again, left to the text to inform readers of the years passed.<sup>106</sup>

Actors were usually asked to bring their own clothes to use as set costumes and to take care of their make-up and hair. Since the budget of most photonovels was low, the production could save a good amount of money by cutting the costs for make-up artists, costume designers and hairstylists. Only in the case of historical photonovels was there need to rent costumes and it does not come as a surprise that only the photonovel productions with larger budgets embarked on this kind of project. When the author of the photonovel was allowed a larger budget to work with, as, for example, for Serra's photonovels, it was not necessary to save money where possible and therefore the photonovel crew could be bolstered by a make-up artist, a costume designer and a hairstylist.

### ***Actors of photonovels in the Belgian corpus***

Although only about half of the photonovels in the Belgian corpus provide credits, this still means that around 300 photonovels do have credits and give information on the actors. If we consider that for each photonovel at least two actors are mentioned, this gives a staggering amount (more than 1,000) that would be impossible to include in a table or closely describe as has been done for authors and photographers. Therefore this chapter focuses exclusively on a limited number of actors, selected because of their recurrence in photonovels, their popularity or their unique characteristics. The selection is not meant to be representative, but rather to give an impression of the variety of actors who can be found posing in photonovels and, in particular, in our corpus. It should be kept in mind

that there are no actor credits for the magazines *Rosita*, *Ons Land met Iris* and *Mimosa / Bonnes Soirées*, while there are barely any credits in *Ons Volk / Chez Nous*.

Not many actors starred consistently in various photonovels. According to the credits in the Belgian corpus, ten is the highest recurrence, held by actor Jean-Pierre Blanchard, who appears in the credits of three photonovels in *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*, four in *Het Rijk der Vrouw* and three in *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*. If we remove from the count the translated photonovels, the actual total is six. This shows that, for the Belgian corpus, working as a photonovel actor was not a fulltime job as acting in films might have been. There were no photonovel celebrities that continued to star in a large variety of photonovels. It was rather a job actors performed for a few photonovel projects, before moving on to other fields.

Sorting through the corpus, only a few names of famous actors stand out. One is certainly that of Marie-José Nat. A French actress, she began her career in the late 1950s and was active particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, starring in movies such as *The Truth* alongside Brigitte Bardot, and the sequels *Anatomy of a Marriage: My Days with Jean-Marc* and *Anatomy of a Marriage: My Days with Françoise*. She won the award for Best Actress at the Cannes Film Festival in 1974 for her performance in the film *Violins at the Ball*. Concerning her appearance in photonovels, she is mentioned in the credits of two, published in *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* and translated into Dutch for *Lectuur voor Allen* and *Het Rijk der Vrouw*. The first photonovel, titled “L’amour est un songe / Liefde is een droom”, was published from October 8<sup>th</sup> 1955 to February 11<sup>th</sup> 1956 (Figure 33).

The photonovel not only predates Nat’s acting career, but it was as a matter of fact her debut as an actress and model. She had in fact won the magazine’s contest for a new actress for photonovels and had been selected to star in this photonovel alongside actor Jean-Claude Pascal.<sup>107</sup> Jean-Claude Pascal was a French actor, thirteen years the senior of Marie-José Nat, who had begun his acting career in 1949. He starred in two photonovels published in *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* and then translated for *Lectuur voor Allen* and *Het Rijk der Vrouw*, and in one of them he is even credited as the author.<sup>108</sup> By the mid-1950s, he was one of the most beloved and appreciated French actors of the time and we can assume that these photonovels must have been extremely popular among the readers and were indeed extensively advertised by the magazine. It seems also clear that starring with him in one of these photonovels put Marie-José Nat in the spotlight.

The second photonovel starring Marie-Josée Nat is “Notre amour est sans issue / Liefde zonder uitkomst”. It is dated 1957, a busy time for the actress who was taking her first steps into the world of cinema. Acting alongside her was Gil Vidal, a third renowned name in the Belgian corpus. Vidal was a French actor popular in the 1950s. In addition to his career in cinema, he also starred successfully in photonovels thanks to his photogenic looks.<sup>109</sup> In our corpus he is mentioned six times as the main actor in two photonovels in *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* and one in *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*, all three of them translated into Dutch and published in *Het Rijk der Vrouw*. As with Jean-Claude Pascal, his presence in the

**JEAN-CLAUDE PASCAL**  
dans  
un roman-film

*L'AMOUR est un songe*

avec  
MARCELLE GENIAT  
Colette GRANIER  
Evelyne OSWALD  
Marc MICHAUD  
Marc THOMAS  
Paul MONTEL

et la gagnante de notre concours  
« RÊVE - RÉALITÉ »

**MARIE-JOSÉE NAT**  
Réalisation de Bernard KELLER  
d'après un scénario de Marianne ANDRAU  
Images de Jean-Paul ALPHEN  
Assistante technique : Hélène MARA'

Marie-Josée NAT a été habillée par LEMPEREUR, maquillée par Jean d'ESTREES, coiffée par POURRIERE.  
Colette GRANIER a été habillée par Jeanne THEVENON.  
Ses chapeaux sont de Evelyne ARZAN.

En exclusivité !

Ce roman-film a été réalisé avec le concours de Jean-Claude Pascal au profit des enfants paralysés dont il s'occupe par l'intermédiaire de ses clubs.  
C'EST UNE PRODUCTION DES ROMANS-FILMS DE « LECTURES D'AUJOURD'HUI »

**Figure 33:** Advertisement for the upcoming photonovel “L’amour est un songe”. Jean-Claude Pascal is clearly the center of attention of this new photonovel and his presence is advertised in big letters. Note that Marie-José Nat is promoted as the winner of the contest “Dream – Reality”. *Lectures d’Aujourd’hui*, October 1<sup>st</sup> 1955.

photonovel was advertised in big letters and must have attracted the attention of readers. The fact that it was French and not Belgian actors starring in these photonovels, although the production was Belgian, indicates, first of all, the broad reach of these magazines, which were distributed not only in Belgium, but also, and in large numbers, in France. It is also symptomatic of the closeness and center-versus-periphery logic that existed between France and Belgium, certainly when it came to cinema and popular media.<sup>110</sup> French actors were in fact not strangers for a Belgian audience, even the one who read the magazines in Dutch, because French cinema was distributed and well known in Belgium. The absence of American film stars should not surprise. Photonovels never became popular in the United States, which meant that there were, on the one hand, no photonovels produced in the US that could be imported and published in Belgium, and, on the other hand, likely no budget to pay an American movie star to act in a Belgian photonovel. Belgian (and European) readers had nonetheless the chance to admire and read about American celebrities thanks to the many film-photonovels that were published in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>111</sup>

Not an actress, but nonetheless renowned, was Jacqueline Auriol. She was a French aviator, the first female French test pilot and one of the first female pilots to break the sound barrier. She was not the typical figure one would expect to star in a photonovel, yet her story had been selected to be told as a photonovel titled “Pilote d’essai / Proefpiloot” (Figure 34) published in *Lectures d’Aujourd’hui / Lectuur voor Allen* from February 11<sup>th</sup> 1956 to May 5<sup>th</sup> 1956, in what the magazine advertised as the “first documentary photonovel ever realized.” Auriol starred in this atypical photonovel as herself, as her story is recounted in detail: her work and achievements, her family, the plane accident and the plastic surgery to reconstruct her face, being married to the son of the President of France, her social life... all of the elements combined together to weave a slightly dramatized narrative that could be both interesting and romantic. What is striking about this photonovel is that there are no speech balloons, but only captions describing in detail Auriol’s life. True to its title of “documentary photonovel”, this is a documentary story where speech balloons have been deemed superfluous. It is difficult to gather what kind of impact this photonovel had on readers, but we can infer that it was not particularly successful as the model was not used again. However, inserted in a context that perceived photonovels as anti-feminist and anti-emanipatory, this story, though romanticized, is a clear example of how misplaced this kind of judgement could be and how, on the contrary, photonovels could and did present positive models of independent, strong women, as seen in Chapter 1.4.

Also not an actor and yet well known was Hugo Koblet, who featured as the protagonist in the photonovel “Le champion bien-aimé / De geliefde kampioen” by Bernar Keller, published between October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1954 and February 12<sup>th</sup> 1955 in *Lectures d’Aujourd’hui / Lectuur voor Allen*. He was a top Swiss cyclist, whose professional life had begun in 1946. By the time he starred in this photonovel, he had won the Giro d’Italia and the Tour de France. He was thus a renowned celebrity not only among cycling fans, but, because of his looks and lifestyle,



**Figure 34:** Promotional pages of the upcoming “documentary photonovel” starring aviator Jacqueline Auriol, in *Lectures d’Aujourd’hui*, February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1956.

among women. According to Faber, Minuit and Takodjerad, Koblet was the first sportsman to act in a francophone photonovel, thus not just in Belgium, but in France as well.<sup>112</sup> The only precedent was boxer Tiberio Mitri, who starred in an Italian photonovel published in the magazine *Sogno* in 1949. The two sportsmen inaugurated the tradition of photonovels with sporting celebrities playing either themselves or someone practicing their own discipline.

A close look at the photonovels published in *Panorama* reveals that there is one recurring actor, Martin Illik. As noted when discussing the magazine in Chapter 3.8, the photonovels starring Illik all belong to the same series that follows the adventures of detective Don Ferguson and were authored by Pal Lukacs and Jacques Van Melkebeke. Illik was not a famous actor and does not seem to have pursued an acting career after these photonovels. He worked, on the contrary, with Pal Lukacs for Real Presse, and was a visual artist and scenarist, mainly active in the comics field, where he wrote, for example, the scenario of “Goro fait l’école buissonnière” published in *Spirou* in 1968. Given his background and considering Van Melkebeke’s own history, it seems plausible to suppose that he knew Van Melkebeke through his work and that this led to him being cast as the main actor in these photonovels. He is also credited as the scenarist of another photonovel in *Panorama*, “Invitation à la mort / Afspraak met de dood”, published between Don Ferguson’s adventures and directed by Hubert Serra. This photonovel

had been likely sold to the magazine by the agency Real Presse and undergone a restyling at the hand of Martin Illik, as a scenarist, and possibly Van Melkebeke, anonymously.

A second name affiliated with Van Melkebeke and the world of comics was that of Jean-Pol. Like Illik, Jean-Pol was not an actor but a comics artist. As a young man, he also worked with Van Melkebeke to handwrite many of his photonovels. From working with Van Melkebeke to starring in one of his photonovels was a short step. Illik's and Jean-Pol's experience confirms once again that the world of photonovels cannot be seen as a separate world, but needs to be considered in its context of relations and collaborations with other print and popular media of the time. The tendency to select actors from among people one knew was present and widely implemented, concurring to create a variegated patchwork of actors of photonovels where movie stars can be found next to sportsmen, professional actors and models and completely unknown people.

To conclude this list is an actress belonging to the category of still unknown professionals, Marie-Christine Cabie. She can be considered a professional because she was represented by the agency Real Presse, which took care of getting her cast in the photonovels she starred in. She is unknown because outside of the few photonovels, she did not pursue an acting career nor one that brought her fame or reconnaissance, but moved on to live a quiet life. Although only credited once in the Belgian corpus, we were able to confirm her as the main actress in a few photonovels following an interview with her at her home in Ghent.<sup>113</sup> Throughout the 1960s she starred in “L’inspecteur chasse les courants d’air / De inspecteur en de ongrijpbaren” alongside Martin Illik, published in *Panorama*, “Le bonheur attend à Portofino / Het geluk wacht in Portofino” and “La mélodie du passé / Melodie uit het verleden” alongside Jean-Pol, published in *Rosita*, “Etait-ce une illusion / Was het een droom?” published in *Bonnes Soirées / Mimosa*, and “Alors qu’il n’espérait plus” published in *Lectures d’Aujourd’hui*. Similar to Cabie's career as an actress in photonovels, there are certainly many other names that belong to people who acted in a few photonovels and then moved on to something else. They remain at the moment unknown, but hopefully in the following years and supported by technology such as face recognition, there might be opportunities for further research in this direction.

#### 4.1.6 Layout

The layout process was an essential step in the making of a photonovel because it brought together the text and the images on the medium that made the photonovel, the page. In order to understand how text and photographs were closely linked from the very beginning of a photonovel, and not just as a consequence of its format, Turzio points out that the composition of the page happened in three phases: the laying out of the selected images, as negatives or small positives; the placement of speech balloons and captions on a transparent background; and the merging of these two elements on paper, which made it possible to appreciate the final layout before sending the photonovel to the printer.<sup>114</sup>

The photographs taken during the shooting of the photonovel were developed and analyzed in this phase.<sup>115</sup> As Turzio suggests, the images were often first left as negatives or developed in a small size, placed next to each other and numbered, in order to fix the order in which they had to appear on the page. Richard Olivier gifted us a notebook that he used specifically for this purpose. On the first page he wrote down the credits, the title of the photonovel – in this case Olivier had yet to decide on the title of this photonovel, but knew that it would be a name, so he simply wrote “un prénom” – the magazine that would publish it and the estimated publishing dates. Figures 35 and 37 show two pages of this notebook, divided in two to mimic the double spread of the magazine. At the top of the page, Olivier annotated the page number (“Pl.” stands for *planche*), namely three and four of the photonovel. On each side he glued the photographs to be used, each with a code referencing the selected photograph. Note the red marks: he used this stage to reframe the images, blotting out in red the parts that needed to be cut out. Comparing this page with the double spreads of the photonovel once published in the magazine (Figures 36 and 38), it is possible to notice that the composition of the left-hand page changed, while the right one remained the same, and that the final photographs are indeed reframed as given by the red marks.

The fact that Olivier divided each page of his notebook in two in order to work on a double spread instead of a single page is not a small detail. The photographs composing a photonovel needed to work together to form not only the narrative as a whole, but also a series of sequences, an ensemble that acquired meaning only when read (or looked at) in its entirety and togetherness.<sup>116</sup> Chirollet describes photonovel sequences as relying on unity of three sorts: thematic, spatial and of time.

*A series of photos must have a thematic unity: a characteristic, unitary subject must emerge from a precise event (the appearance of a character, material event modifying the course of events, the beginning of a sequence of memories, imaginary, utopian, etc.). [...]*

*This unity is reinforced by the unity of space and that of time, as there is accord among the subject addressed by the sequence, the place where it takes place, which is easily identifiable by the spatial clues of the characters, and the time during which it takes place. Generally, a change of epoch or circumstance is signaled by a simultaneous change of the spatial frame, of the clothes and of the situations between characters. Likewise, a change in the mental mode of the story (an evoked past, an imaginary future, another moment in the present of the story) is signaled by a modification of the objects and characters, as well as by appropriate photographic procedures, such as the depth of field or blurs and chromatic alterations.<sup>117</sup>*

This logic of sequences rather than individual images clearly shows how the photographs move away from the isolated character of traditional photographs, in order to participate in various sequences and create particular dynamics.<sup>118</sup> A page of a photonovel was usually divided into three or four tiers, each featuring two or three photographs. While this was

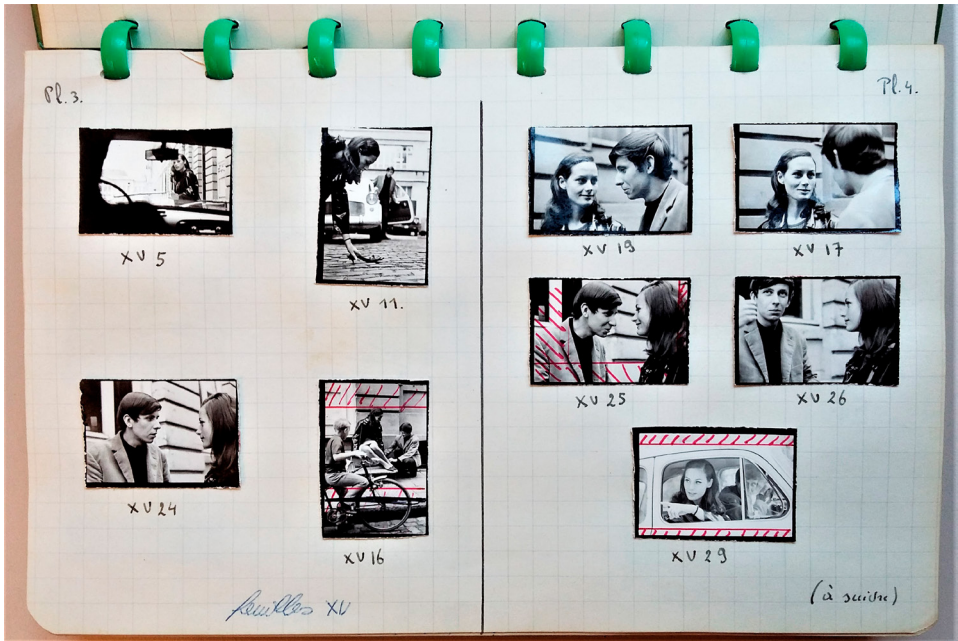


Figure 35: A page of Richard Olivier's notebook, where a 'pre'-layout is created (Collection University Library KU Leuven).

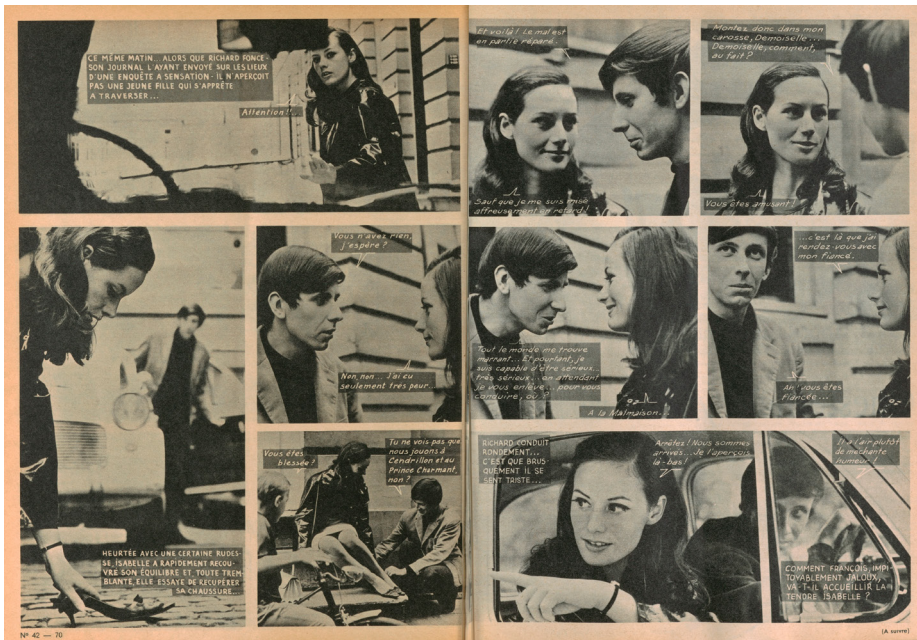


Figure 36: Pages 3 and 4 of the photonovel "Isabelle / Isabel" published in *Chez Nous / Ons Volk* from October 20<sup>th</sup> 1966 to January 19<sup>th</sup> 1967.



Chapter 4



Figure 37: A page of Richard Olivier's notebook, where a 'pre-lay-out' is created (Collection University Library KU Leuven).



Figure 38: Pages 5 and 6 of the photobook "Isabelle / Isabel" published in *Chez Nous / Ons Volk* from October 20<sup>th</sup> 1966 to January 19<sup>th</sup> 1967.

a standard layout of the page, the grid was flexible and could present a different composition according to the aims of the authors of the photonovel. While the images were static, it was in the careful layout and composition of the page that a certain dynamicity could be rendered. As Bernardes Habert points out, it is in making the layout, in the careful combination of images of different sizes on the same page, that movement was given to the story. The size and combination of images was not arbitrary, but could reinforce the dramatic intensity of the scene as well as render the narrative more dynamic and expressive.<sup>119</sup> The composition of the photographs on the page could largely differ from one photonovel to the next. Photonovels of poorer quality often applied the two-by-three or three-by-four grid to every page, lacking the skills, personnel or interest needed to create a more complex composition. The result was thus a static and monotonous photonovel that presented little to no variations. This should not surprise, as the process was time-consuming and required a certain eye for details, dynamics and storytelling, often provided by a skillful layout artist or, at times, by the author of the photonovel himself. Notions of timing, rhythm and climax were essential to a dynamic composition.<sup>120</sup> Serra, for example, deemed the layout process one of the most essential moments of the making of a photonovel and took care of it himself.<sup>121</sup> In his autobiography he gives an example of the importance of the layout to convey a central message (Figure 39). The photonovel in question revolves around a woman who is in love with two men and struggles to choose between the two. In his layout, Serra worked with the double spread and placed two similar photographs facing each other. Both images are the same size and capture the main protagonist with one of the two love interests; although the place and costumes are different, what remains the same is the emotion and the passion expressed by the female protagonist. The layout becomes therefore a way to express to the readers the difficulty and struggle the protagonist faces in having to make a choice between her two beloved.<sup>122</sup>

However, it is a fact that Serra's productions, though limited by time constraints, budget and the available technology, like any other photonovel, nonetheless had access to larger funds than the average photonovel and were steered by the passion of their maker. The struggle to aim for a certain esthetic and complexity is more visible here and in the photonovels of a few others similar to Serra than in the vast majority of photonovels produced in series, at a fast pace and with little interest in the quality of the final product.

After what could be called the 'pre'-layout, the selected photographs were developed and laid out on the page of the photonovel to create the desired composition and sequences. The paper used for each page was usually a thick sheet of paper, with a grainy quality, and between A4 and A3 size. The images were glued on the page, keeping in mind the way readers would approach and look at the page. There would usually be one key image on the page, which would catch the reader's eye and provide initial information on the page and the story. The other photographs surrounding it were less functional, and served the purpose of supporting and enriching the story. As Saint-Michel describes it, the gaze of



**Figure 39:** Serra's example to highlight the importance of the layout. "Le cœur se trompe", *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*, March 5<sup>th</sup> 1969 (© Roularta).

the reader would look globally at the page and then began searching for the information contained in the images and text, moving back and forth and connecting the functional images, noticing forms, lines, composition, lighting and trying to make sense of it.<sup>123</sup> The sequences were generally made of four to seven images, in a mix of functional and support images.<sup>124</sup> A skillful layout artist would try to emphasize some narrative elements of the story through the placement of the photographs, with the aim of making the narrative more expressive and easier to absorb for the readers. For this reason, while variations to the grid were welcome to break an otherwise monotonous layout, too much variation and asymmetrical compositions were discouraged, as they rendered reading more difficult. A feeling of harmony and balance was fundamental for a good layout.<sup>125</sup> Photonovels were published in episodes, a division that needed to be reflected by the layout. Depending on the requirements of the magazine, a minimum of two to a maximum of six pages were devoted to one episode. This amount was generally known when starting to make the photonovel, so that the script could be written in such a way that already took into consideration the necessary division into episodes. Consequently, the photographs were taken with this partition in mind and the layout only served to finalize the division into episodes. This meant that the narrative as illustrated by the photographs presented a balanced set of images divided into sequences, in order to avoid abrupt ruptures at the end of each episode.

Some of the photographs could feature manipulations, which were done once the images had found their place on the page. Common manipulations were the blurring of the background, the insertion of so-called vignetting – an effect of fading towards the edges of the image – and small, regular dashes to indicate rain or flowing water.<sup>126</sup>

The space of the page was not occupied only by photographs, but also needed to accommodate the text. This was not placed directly on the images, but was written on a transparent sheet of paper, then overlaid on the page. The text mainly consisted of dialogue and needed to be short and to the point, in order to keep a balanced layout between words and images. Its function was essential: it not only gave a voice to the characters, but also made the photographs speak and the narration proceed.<sup>127</sup> Where the images lacked movement and action, the text came in to bridge the gap and fill in the readers on the happenings that could or would not be portrayed in the photographs. So the text introduced new sequences, gave indications of time and space, clarified the emotional sphere of the characters, narrated action, hinted at sex or violence, all in simple and straightforward language for the benefit of the readers.<sup>128</sup> It should be noted that the language used for the text was written language, even though the vast majority of the text consisted of dialogue. This resulted in the characters of the photonovel ‘speaking’ in an unnatural and artificial way. Some elements of the spoken language could be added, but did not manage to truly diversify the language: all characters, whether they came from an aristocratic background or belonged to the working class, whether they were old or young, whether they came from the same village or from different places, all spoke in exactly the same way.<sup>129</sup>

The way the text looked on the page was similar among photonovels, but not entirely standardized (Figures 40, 41, and 42). On the one hand, text consisted uniformly of captions and speech balloons, divided into balloons dedicated to speaking and, less frequently, balloons that portrayed the action of thinking. Sounds and noises expressed as onomatopoeias were typical of comics, but were not used in photonovels.<sup>130</sup> On the other hand, the way captions and speech balloons appeared on the page could largely differ from one photonovel to the other, even when published by the same magazine. The text could be uppercase or lowercase, handwritten or typed, black or white. The captions could occupy a space next to or between the images, or could be placed inside the space of the image, usually on the upper side, more rarely on the bottom. The speech balloons, while universally inside the space of the image, could be rendered by a simple “v” symbol (the tail) to indicate the speaker, be underlined or be enclosed by a line or a rectangular form; they could be accentuated by a white or black background, or be placed on a blurred section of the image. Independently from the style chosen, once a choice was made, it was used consistently throughout the photonovel. The selection, layout and framing of the photographs always took into account the presence of the text.<sup>131</sup> Photographs therefore usually featured extra space next to the characters or an unusual composition that found its completion only when the text was added to the image.



**Figure 40:** Example of handwritten, uppercase text. The captions are placed next to the images, while the speech balloons are written inside a white, rectangular form. “Mon tendre amour”, *Chez Nous*, May 10<sup>th</sup> 1956.



**Figure 41:** Example of handwritten, uppercase text. Here the speech balloons are placed on the photograph and underlined. Note that the color of the text changes between black and white in order to make it stand out more against the background. The caption is placed inside the image. The hand behind this text is that of Jean-Pol. “Het jacht met de gouden kiel”, *Panorama*, November 19<sup>th</sup> 1963.



**Figure 42:** Example of typed, lowercase text. The caption is placed inside the image, on a darkened and blurred background. The captions highlight the speaker with a tail and are also placed on a slightly darkened background. “Mademoiselle Justice”, *Lectures d’Aujourd’hui*, March 31<sup>st</sup> 1956.

The first page of a photonovel needed to leave the space for the title and, when present, the credits. Up to the top two-thirds of the page was therefore left blank, the title and credits added by the magazine independently from the production of the photonovel. Although there was no standardization here either, there often appeared a generic image next to the title, of the protagonist or a landscape or an interior that would show up in the story. The title itself was often hand-lettered, presented in a large and eye-catching font. The first page of each subsequent episode also needed to account for the title, a shortened version of the credits – often the main actors if he/she was famous, and the production of the photonovel – and the summary of the previous episodes.

Once the images had been laid out and the text superimposed on the transparent paper, the pages, numbered, were placed in a paper package and provided to the magazine, which would then make the final adjustments and send them to the printer together with the rest of the magazine. This parcel could then be returned to the author of the photonovel or kept by the magazine, either to be thrown away or resold to another magazine. When the photonovel was distributed by an agency, they were usually the ones handling the parcel and giving it to the magazines that bought the photonovel. The magazines, as seen above, could do with these pages what they wished, even slightly change the layout, reframe the images or break the pages in two in order to add articles or commercials in between.

### 4.1.7 Translations

The photonovel was complete, its making finalized. Before discussing the printing technique, however, it is necessary to spend a few words on translations. The Belgian corpus is a good example for this topic because, on the one hand, it consisted of many imported photonovels, some of which needed to be translated, and, on the other hand, due to the bilingualism of the country and the francophone and netherlandophone editions of the magazines, meaning that translating photonovels from French to Dutch, and more rarely from Dutch to French, was an everyday matter.

In general terms, as Bernardes Habert points out, “[u]nlike other cultural products, the reproduction of the photonovel does not correspond to the simple multiplication of the original. On the contrary, it undergoes a process of translation, adaptation and reorganization.”<sup>132</sup> The photonovel, once its success was established, was realized not only to be published in the country of origin, but also as a cultural product to export. As such, the story usually followed generic patterns and avoided specific characteristics of national identity.<sup>133</sup> However, countries and cultures are different and as much as the photonovel makers tried to stick to general situations, some elements nonetheless needed an effort in adaptation. The most common of these elements were: names, which were translated from foreign to familiar names; places or geographical elements, for example a river flowing in Italy would be replaced by a French one; and license plates, generally either scratched out, blurred or superimposed with a piece of paper presenting a fictive license plate in the style of the country of publication (Figure 43).



These changes were done by the magazine itself, after having bought the photonovel. The package with the pages of the photonovel became the raw material the editors could work with. As noted above, the texts were not written on the page with the photographs, but on sheets of transparent paper. This made it easy to take the two elements making up the photonovel – text and images – apart and superimpose onto the pages new transparent papers with the text in translation. If the dialogue used an artificial mix of written language and spoken elements with no diversification, the translations rarely helped to turn the language into a more current version, remaining rather stiff and unnatural.<sup>134</sup>

**Figure 43:** The license plate of the car has been scratched out. “La mélodie du passé”, *Rosita*, April 14<sup>th</sup> 1964.

The team put together for making a photonovel was much smaller when it came to reusing foreign material. In this case it was in fact only necessary to have one person who took care of the translation and one person (or the same one) who matched the new texts to the layout of the photonovel.<sup>135</sup> Many of the photonovels in the Belgian corpus had two versions, one in French and one in Dutch, published in sister magazines such as *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw* and *Chez Nous / Ons Volk*. If some photonovels remained exactly the same – all of the ones in *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui / Lectuur voor Allen* and in *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw* – it is striking to notice that most magazines, even the ones with the same content, presented variations in the two versions of the same photonovel. One of the most remarkable changes was the title page of the photonovel. It has been noted that this space was compiled by the editors of the magazine and not by the authors of the photonovel. Apparently, even when the translation was in the netherlandophone sister of a francophone magazine or vice versa, changes were allowed. Figure 44 offers a beautiful example of this: note how dissimilar the title of this photonovel is in its two translations, presenting two completely different styles; the generic image, typically appearing on the title banner, remains the same, but it is framed differently. The text also uses a different font, but this is to be expected, considering that it was handwritten. Also to be expected is that the text fits differently in its dedicated black boxes, since each language uses more or fewer words to convey the same message. In Figure 45, however, we can notice a series of additional differences. While it was inevitable that the font would change as the hand writing the text was not the same, the style of the text could however be kept. However, this was mostly not the case. The speech balloons are underlined in the francophone version, while the netherlandophone translation uses flourishes on the tail. Moreover, the version in French makes a distinction between captions, written in capital letters and enclosed by a line, and speech balloons, all in lowercase. In Dutch there is no such difference, with captions and speech balloons written exactly in the same way and all uppercase.

An additional variation can be found not in the pages or photographs of a photonovel, but in the way it shares the space inside the magazine. Figure 46 presents a page of the photonovel “Retour de flamme” (on the left) published in *Bonnes Soirées* and its translation “Het geheim van Jules Tercy” (on the right) in *Mimosa*. While the two pages present virtually no differences, the latter occupies the usual space of one page of the magazine, whereas the former is strikingly placed in between two pages and surrounded by advertisements. The result is a confusing double spread, where the reader’s eye is left wondering whether it needs to look horizontally, crossing from the left-hand page to the right, or vertically, focusing first on the column on the left and then moving to the one on the right. The dilemma is naturally easily solved by reading the photonovel, which immediately clarifies to the reader to read horizontally. However, given the importance of layout and composition in photonovels, such a placement of the photonovel page seems to suggest a lack of attention or outright disinterest from the editors of the magazine regarding the specificity of the photonovel.





Figure 44: Title page of the photobook “Raadsels” on the left, published in *Ons Volk* on September 15<sup>th</sup> 1966, next to its francophone version titled “Énigmes” published in *Chez Nous* on the same date.



Figure 45: On the left page two of “De kwelling van het verleden”, *Ons Volk*, October 9<sup>th</sup> 1958. On the right its francophone version, “L’obsession du passé”, *Chez Nous*, same date.



Figure 46: “Retour de flamme”(left) published in *Bonnes Soirées* on June 29<sup>th</sup> 1958 (© Dupuis) and “Het geheim van Jules Tercy” (right) published in *Mimosa* on the same date.

Richard Olivier gifted us some of his original photonovels, which were returned to him after their publication in the magazine. Written in French and published in *Chez Nous*, they needed to be translated into Dutch for the netherlandophone version to be published in *Ons Volk*. On the pages of these photonovels it is possible to witness a snippet of what the translation process must have been like. These pages were in fact used to make editorial annotations, reminding staff members to blur out the license plates, for example, or to translate a letter on a separate piece of paper. Figure 47 shows a page of one of Olivier’s photonovels, prior to publication. The transparent sheet of paper with the texts is placed on top of the page with the photographs, stuck with two pieces of tape. Lightly written in pencil, it is possible to spot two editorial annotations. The photonovel featured a note, fixed to the wall by what looks to be a letter opener. This note appeared in two photographs on this page, on the top-right in small format and on the bottom-left at full size. The note was not part of the text written on the transparent paper and easily removed, but was captured in the two photographs as part of the props of the photonovel. Some editing was therefore needed in order to change the text from French to Dutch. On the top-right image, where we see the note hanging on the wall, but can hardly read it, the editor had circled the note and left the following request: “Koffegem, let op! Voor OU de tekst onleesbaar maken!” (“Koffegem, watch out! Before OU make the text unreadable!”). Koffegem must have been the person in charge of getting the photonovel ready to be printed in translation. Since the photograph could hardly be removed and replaced with one with the text in translation, and digital editing techniques were not an option at the time, the decision of the editor was to simply blur the text and make it unreadable. “OU” was probably the next phase the photonovel had to undergo, which could be a

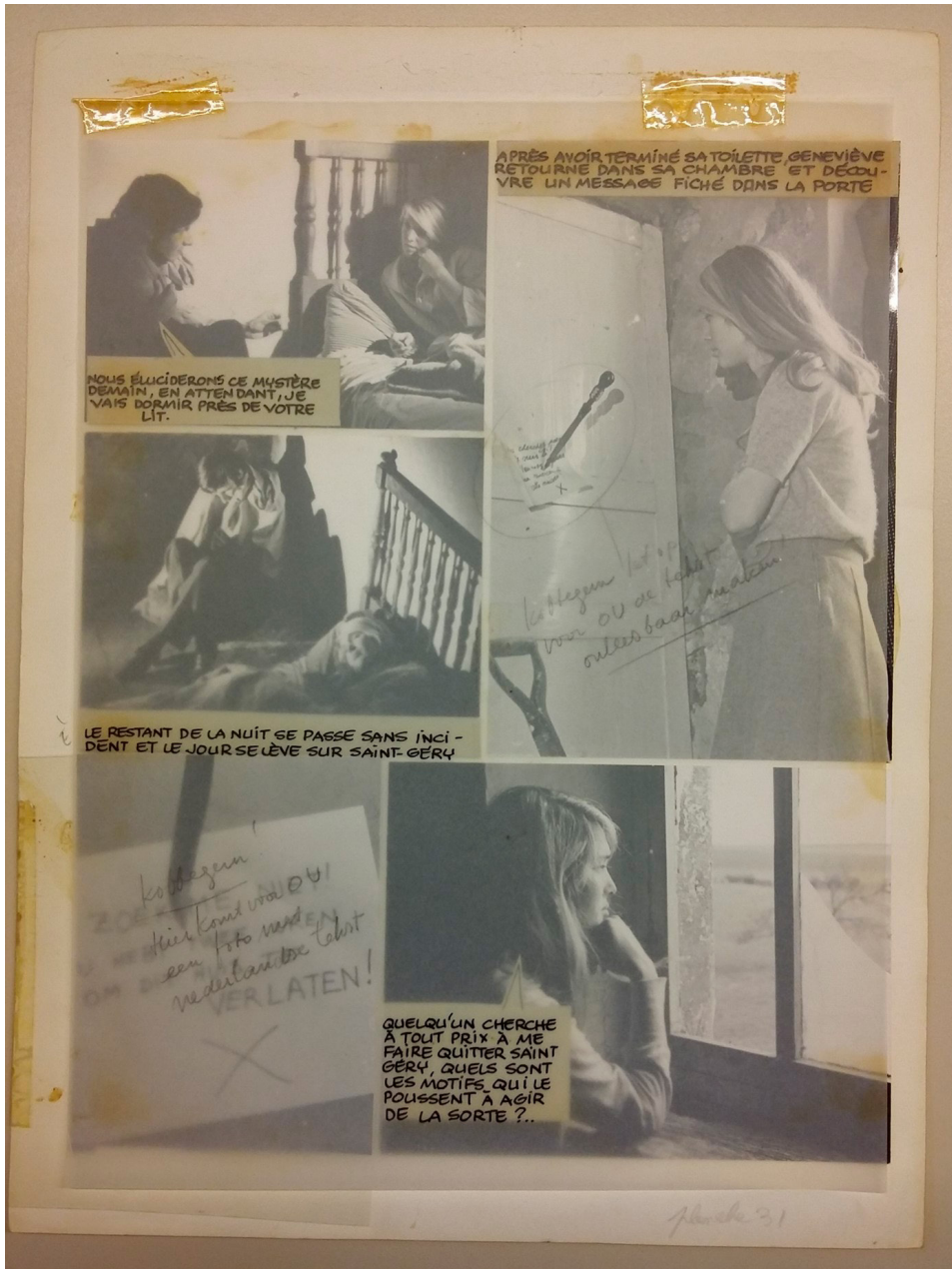


Figure 47: Page of one of Olivier’s photonovels, with annotations on translation. “Le Sire de St-Gery”, *Chez Nous*, March 13<sup>th</sup> 1969.



**Figure 48:** The original note depicted in the photonovel (right) and the photograph that will replace it, with the translation in Dutch (left).

final reading of the translated photonovel or the moment when it was sent to print. The bottom-left photograph showed the note so that readers could read what it said. Once again, the editor left a message for Koffegem: “Koffegem! Hier komt voor OU een foto met nederlandse tekst” (“Koffegem! Before OU, here comes a photo with Dutch text”). Figure 48 shows, next to the original image of the note, the photograph portraying the text in Dutch translation, made to replace the original. This photograph would in fact be placed on top of the original and printed in its stead. The hand of the protagonist, recognizable by the ring, did not appear in the new image, and the letter opener was replaced by a regular knife. Moreover, if we take a closer look at the translation, it is possible to spot a mistake, in addition to one missing sentence: the protagonist is asked to leave the house in two days and not two hours, as in the Dutch translation.

Figure 49 presents a similar example. A letter is portrayed in the photonovel, shown in its entirety on the bottom-left image. Here we can see red markings encircling the letter made by the editor, with the following message: “Voor HR De Decker, gelieve de tekst op apart wit papiertje te tekenen” (“To Mr. De Decker, please draw the text on a separate piece of white paper”). Unlike the example analyzed above, the solution adopted here was to rewrite the letter on a piece of paper, which would then be overlaid on the image, covering the original letter. Once printed, the edit would hardly be noticeable.

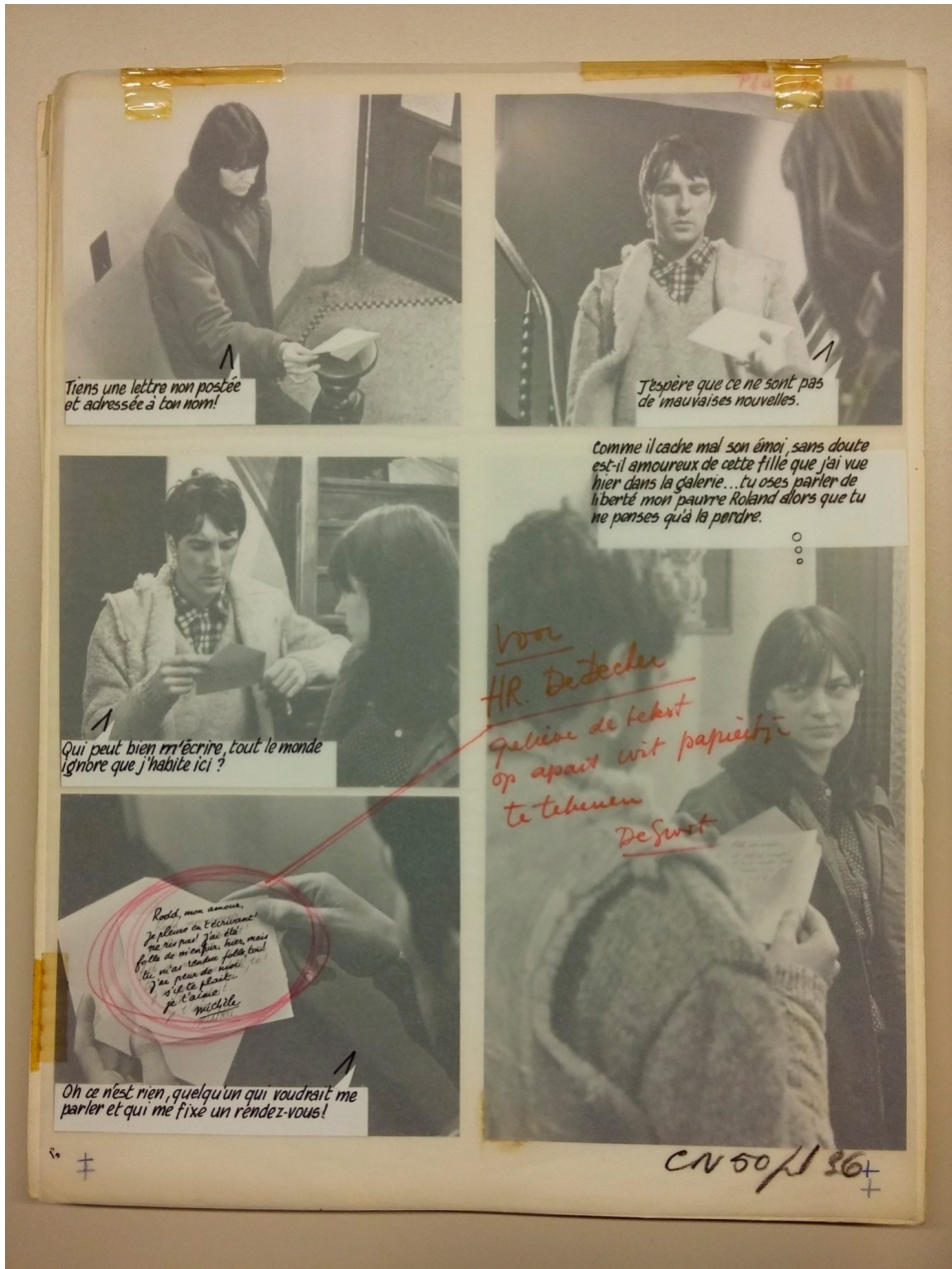


Figure 49: A page of one of Olivier's photonovels, presenting annotations on the translation.

"Au hasard des rues", *Chez Nous*, December 9<sup>th</sup> 1971.

## 4.2 Print process

When the photonovel was ready, the pages with the laid-out photographs and texts were provided to the magazine redaction and printed together with the rest of the magazine. The printing process used for magazines of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s – magazines characterized by the presence of a large number of images, poor paper quality and mass production – went through an evolution in the technique used, especially significant in the 19<sup>th</sup> century thanks to the discovery of photography, which allowed for a partial automatization of the process. Stefania Turzio in *Il Fotoromanzo. Metamorfosi delle storie lacrimevoli* dedicates a section to “La tecnica e la sua storia” (“The technique and its history”), where she describes the important consequences of the photonovel’s printing process on the relationship between image and text; similarly, Serge Saint-Michel in *Le Roman-Photo* touches briefly upon the printing technique to highlight its complexity.<sup>136</sup> Drawing from both these works, this section goes a step further and analyzes the evolution and strictly technical aspects of the photonovel’s – and more generally of women’s weeklies’ – printing process, paying particular attention to the role of photography. Although photography is indisputably an integral part of the identity of photonovels, we will see that the printing process was only partially based on photographic processes. Understanding the workings of the photonovel’s printing process allows for a general observation on the nature of the images that made up photonovels and the differences that exist between them and photographs printed entirely with photographic processes.

### 4.2.1 Photomechanical processes

To discuss the complexity and technicality of printing processes, it is essential to know what a print is. In Antony Griffiths’ words, a “print is in essence a pictorial image which has been produced by a process which enables it to be multiplied.”<sup>137</sup>

Designing and manufacturing the printing matrix, and then inking and impressing it on paper, was a long and highly specialized process. The revolutionary power of photography in the printing field could be fully appreciated when new processes were discovered that enabled “the photograph itself to be transformed into, or be used as a base for, a printing matrix that could be printed in one of the standard traditional ways”,<sup>138</sup> such as letterpress, intaglio or surface printing.<sup>139</sup> This reduced notably the manufacturing time for the matrix and got rid of the need to design one altogether. The whole of these processes that photographically generated an image for the printing matrix, but whose final print is ink on paper – thus not on a photosensitive material – is referred to as ‘photomechanical’.<sup>140</sup> Helena E. Wright reports the words of Sylvester R. Koehler, who was the curator of graphic arts at the Smithsonian in the 1880s, during a time of fast-paced discovery and early implementation of the photomechanical processes. In an evaluation of the quickly changing technologies and their impact on pictorial representations, he

identified the critical innovation of photomechanics as follows: “The block or plate which is to produce the print is wholly or partly the result of the chemical action of light [...] while the print itself is the product of the press, a mechanical contrivance.”<sup>141</sup> In more general terms, this meant that, after experimenting with new discoveries, overcoming the technical aspects and fine-tuning the production, a way had been found “to print photographs mechanically, that is, with permanent, non-fading printer’s ink from one matrix, in a format compatible with typographic printing, and to eliminate the need for mounting.”<sup>142</sup> This method was so much more functional that it ousted the traditional print processes, which continued to be used only for artists’ prints.<sup>143</sup>

#### 4.2.2 The evolution of rotogravure

Belonging to the photomechanical processes, the process used to print magazines and photonovels was rotogravure (also called ‘gravure’ and, at times, confused with ‘photogravure’). This was a mechanized printing process derived from photogravure and combined intaglio and photographic printing technologies. Prior to and essential for the discovery and perfection of this process, a number of innovations were introduced. First of all, in 1852, Talbot patented a way to use sensitized gelatin to produce photographic etchings.<sup>144</sup> Without going too much into the specifics, it is relevant to know that etchings fall under the category of intaglio prints, which were characterized by the particular technique of printing from a metal plate, usually copper; after the image or drawing was cut on the plate – the technique used for the incisions distinguishes the different process of the intaglio family – the plate was inked, wiped clean so that only the recesses in the plate would hold the ink, and then printed by forcing the paper into the grooves to pull out the ink.<sup>145</sup> Talbot experimented with the light-sensitive nature of chromated gelatin and its ability to harden selectively.<sup>146</sup> He discovered that if a steel plate was coated with a gelatin layer sensitized with potassium dichromate, and then exposed under a positive image, it was possible to transpose the positive image on the gelatin layer and use it as a resist.<sup>147</sup> This was particularly useful for the etching process, which entailed that the metal plate, instead of being hand cut with a tool, was bitten away with acid; in order to create the image, only portions of the plate needed to be bitten away and therefore a ground impervious to acid (a resist) was smeared on the plate. Traditionally, the image would then be manually drawn through the resist layer in order to expose the metal.<sup>148</sup> The light-sensitive gelatin, however, hardened when exposed to light, but remained soft when shielded.<sup>149</sup> This meant that if a positive was put on top of the plate coated in gelatin, the spots behind the black portions of the image would remain soft while the ones touched by light would harden. The soft areas could then be washed away in water, while the hardened ones worked as a resist when the plate was placed to be bitten with a mordant. Therefore, without the need for human intervention, “the darks on the positive were etched, thus creating an intaglio plate for printing that was a direct translation of the photographed image.”<sup>150</sup>

The second innovation at the basis of the discovery of rotogravure derived from the need for a grain to hold the ink into the etched recesses. Etchings allowed for the production of line art, but tonal effects were difficult to obtain because they entailed etching small and closely spaced recesses onto the metal plate. The difficulty was in the creation of grooves with steep enough edges that could, on the one hand, avoid foul-biting and, on the other hand, hold the ink and avoid it being dislodged during the wiping process. Within the intaglio family, the problem had been addressed with the invention of the mezzotint and of the aquatint. Using two different techniques to create the incisions, both processes allowed for the creation of a fine grain on the metal plate that retained the ink when the plate was wiped. It was possible to obtain different areas of tone by varying the depth of the recesses. Biting to different depths could be done either by “using a stopping-out varnish or by laying grounds which [varied] in thickness or use[d] grains of different degrees of fineness.”<sup>151</sup> The aquatint technique was often used in combination with etching: the metal plate was first bitten with an aquatint ground and then etched, allowing for tonal variations.<sup>152</sup>

The next step and third innovation was the use of a screen and, more particularly, the invention of the halftone screen. As early as the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, photographers and manufacturers began experimenting with new possibilities to create the fine grain needed to hold the ink into the grooves of the plate and allow for tonal variations. Talbot, in his 1852 patent, described using, together with the aquatint ground, gauze and linen screens for this purpose.<sup>153</sup> The use of a screen instead of an aquatint ground allowed for the creation of a regularly patterned grain that broke up a continuous tonal image into “an array of discontinuous dots”, the halftones.<sup>154</sup> The importance of this discovery was threefold: firstly, breaking up the image into patterns generated the illusion of tone, which solved the problem of reproducing photographic tonal gradations, previously unattainable;<sup>155</sup> secondly, the grid created via the screen presented steep enough edges, which meant that the ink easily remained trapped in the grooves; finally, the screen removed the necessity to manually create a grain, allowing for a mechanization of the process.

How the halftone screen worked, more specifically, is explained by van Dijk:

*The principle of artificial screening is that a photographic image gets broken up through an optical procedure into grid dots equally distanced from each other. The diameter of each dot corresponds to the degree of blackening of the original image. If the original, for example, has on a given spot a black value of 10%, this will be automatically optically converted through the screen in a small black dot with a diameter 10% its assigned surface. The remaining 90% of the surface remains uncovered and it is paper white. At a sufficient distance the human eye sees, through the optical combination of black and white, 10% black or, in other words, light grey.<sup>156</sup>*

Halftone screens usually consisted of two glass plates joined together. On one horizontal black lines were engraved, while on the other vertical ones. Together, they formed a



screen with regular grid holes. In order to break up the original image into halftones, the image was placed in front of a process camera to be captured on a light-sensitive plate; the halftone screen was positioned between the camera and the light-sensitive plate. As the light reflected on the original was projected through the camera, it was broken up by the screen into cones of light of different dimensions – the dimension varying according to how much light the original image reflected. These cones of light were captured on the sensitized plate as black dots, creating the halftone image. High contrast and sharpness were necessary to turn the blurry tridimensional light cones into a sharp, two-dimensional image that could be used as a starting point in the making of the printing matrix.<sup>157</sup>

Finally, the last element essential to the discovery of rotogravure was another photo-mechanical process, namely photogravure. Developed by Karl Klič in 1879, photogravure involved a copper plate with an aquatint ground, a layer of pigmented bichromated gelatin on a paper substrate (carbon tissue) and a photographic positive. The carbon tissue, once sensitized, was exposed under the positive; the gelatin would harden to a variable depth according to how much light it received, thus creating an impression of the image in the gelatin to be used as a resist necessary for etching.<sup>158</sup> This layer was then adhered to the copper plate, which had been previously given a uniform aquatint ground, and washed to remove the paper substrate and ensure that all soft gelatin would wash away, while the hardened gelatin remained in layers of varying thickness. The copper plate, covered in aquatint ground and gelatin resist, was then dried and bitten in acid. As explained above, the resulting etching would present recesses of varying depths according to the tone of the original image. The plate was then cleaned, entirely hand-inked, wiped and printed on a flat-bed press by forcing the paper into the grooves to pull out the ink.<sup>159</sup> The resulting print possessed fine details and tonal gradations comparable to those of photographs, and the process was therefore very popular for the reproduction of tonal originals.<sup>160</sup> However, photogravure was an expensive process and a skilled business, even when the cross-line screen replaced the aquatint ground, and thus it never reached a wide commercial application “outside the field of luxury facsimiles.”<sup>161</sup>

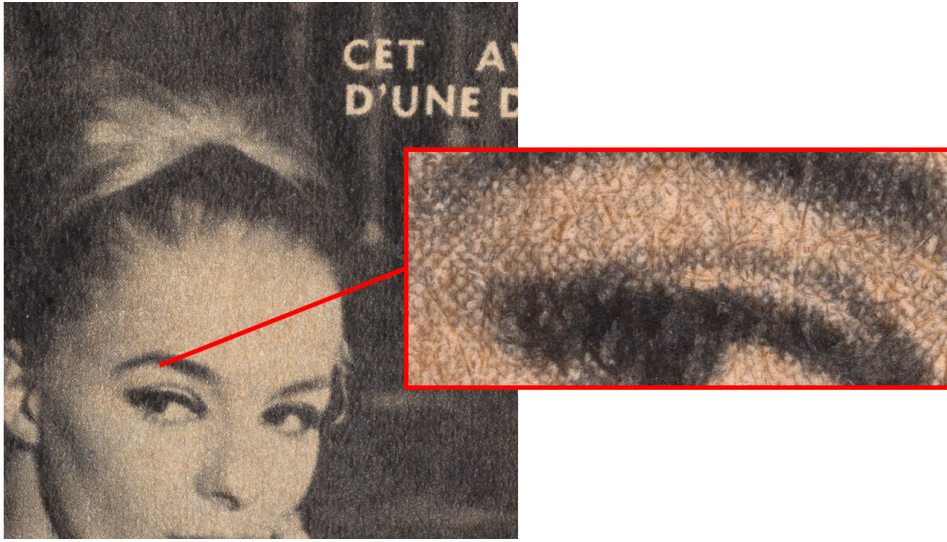
The need for a faster, cheaper and more commercially viable printing option was at the root of the development of the rotogravure process. Following years of experimentation, rotogravure combined the most important innovations and discoveries of the time in a mechanized printing process that could be integrated into a rotary printing press, thus allowing for a fast printing speed and large numbers of prints to be produced at an affordable price.<sup>162</sup> The etched surface was in fact the truly innovative element of this process, otherwise very similar to (machine) photogravure: not a copper plate, but a copper or steel cylinder.<sup>163</sup> The process involved: a photographic positive transparency, that is, the image to be reproduced held on a transparent base, also known as a diapositive or slide; a gravure (or cross-line) screen, which broke up image tones and ensured that the ink would remain in place; and a carbon tissue (a layer of bichromated gelatin on paper substrate), to be turned

into the etching resist. First of all, the positive transparency of the image to be printed was created with a process camera. The carbon tissue was then sensitized in ammonium or potassium dichromate and allowed to dry on a smooth surface in order to ensure flatness and uniformity.<sup>164</sup> Once dried, the light-sensitive gelatin was exposed through the screen and then through the transparency in order to create the resist.<sup>165</sup> As mentioned above, the gelatin hardened differently according to how much light it received. It should be noted that the gravure screen differed from the halftone screen in that it was not designed to capture tone by intentionally varying the size of each dot. What varied was the depth of each dot (in rotogravure called ‘cells’), allowing for more or less ink to be held; the quantity of ink captured in each cell corresponded to the degree of darkening of the original image.<sup>166</sup> Once the image was transposed onto the gelatin layer, this was then adhered to the copper or steel cylinder. The paper substrate was removed and the gelatin washed off, getting rid of the soft parts while maintaining the hardened ones.<sup>167</sup> The metal cylinder was subsequently bitten in acid, in a series of ferric chloride baths of decreasing concentrations. Its surface was eaten away to varying depths according to the thickness of the resist, which in turn corresponded to the tone of the positive. Once the etching was complete, the cylinder was thoroughly washed and dried.<sup>168</sup> At this point it was ready to be used for printing.

The printing unit consisted of the etched cylinder, an ink pan (or ink fountain), a doctor blade and an impression roller. The process is clearly described by the European Rotogravure Association (ERA):

*In the press, there is a printing unit for each cylinder. The surface of the rotating cylinder dips into an ink pan which fills the cells with ink (the inks for gravure printing are very fluid [...]). Surplus ink is then wiped off the cylinder surface by the squeegee action of the doctor blade, leaving ink only in the cells. The impression roller then presses the paper web onto the cylinder, and the ink transfers onto the paper.<sup>169</sup>*

The result was a print made of ink on paper. Instead of using individual sheets of paper, the press unit worked with rolls of paper, also called webs. The paper used for printing could be coated or uncoated, which determined the degree to which ink penetrated the paper surface. Common paper coatings were clay, talc and ground calcium carbonate.<sup>170</sup> The choice of paper also influenced the surface sheen, which in rotogravure prints was often matte, unless a varnish was applied on the surface after printing.<sup>171</sup> Under magnification it becomes possible to discern the cross-lined pattern of the gravure screen. The dimension of the cells depended on the fineness of the gravure screen. The example in Figure 50 shows a detail of a photonovel page at two different levels of magnification. On the left side, the human eye sees a generally grainy appearance, but cannot yet entirely capture the regular pattern of the cells. It is only when the image is further magnified that it is possible to see fine cells of varying densities. Note how they vary according to the amount of ink, producing the tonal var-



**Figure 50:** Magnification of a photonovel page.

iation. What can also be noted is the absence of surface sheen, which signifies that the paper used in this case is uncoated. Paper fibers are also discernible, which, in combination with the absence of coating, indicate the one-layer structure of this print: simply ink on paper.

The first rotogravure press was operational as early as 1893.<sup>172</sup> It had been developed by Karl Klič in an attempt to maintain the image quality of photogravure while automating the printing process. However, he did not patent his discovery and kept it a secret until 1903. Once the process became known, it quickly gained popularity due to its combination of printing speed, image quality and automatization. It first became well known during the interbellum period, but it was the large production of popular magazines after World War II that established the process as leading in the sector<sup>173</sup> and made it grow into a successful and still existing industry – though a few advancements in printing machinery have been made, the process is today relatively unchanged.<sup>174</sup> The production of the cylinders was costly and therefore best suited for long runs and high-volume printing, such as the popular magazines that contained photonovels.<sup>175</sup>

It has been mentioned above that the most important innovation of rotogravure was that it could be efficiently integrated into a rotary printing press. This meant that images and text could be printed together instead of having to go through different printing processes, as had always happened with previous methods.<sup>176</sup> As Turzio notes, this changed the way the page was laid out:

*The page, simple or double, is now put together on transparent substrates, positioned on a light table, on which it is possible to write, paste images, insert types of different sizes. Size,*

*position and color of the text can be freely arranged, avoiding the constraints of the old typography column. In turn, images are displayed in the size and position desired.*<sup>177</sup>

The advantage of this method is that it made it possible to create and immediately visualize the final layout of the page, eliminating the need to wait until the page had gone through the various phases of the printing. This meant a newly acquired freedom in the arrangement of the page and, as Turzio suggests, a new relationship between image and text that relied on the new principles of page composition.<sup>178</sup> The text printed using rotogravure presented a distinct appearance when magnified, as can be seen in Figure 51. Looking closely at the caption it is in fact possible to distinguish the pattern of the gravure screen, typical of the rotogravure printing process.<sup>179</sup>

Although it is impossible to pinpoint the exact moment when rotogravure was implemented in Belgium, it is likely that by the 1920s rotogravure units had found their place in the printing presses.<sup>180</sup> The magazine *Graphica* can help shed some light on the matter. *Graphica* was a monthly magazine published in Belgium in the postwar period by the Union of the Printing Industries. Its aim was to showcase what the Belgian printing industries had to offer as state-of-the-art printing services and products, by presenting a collection of works accompanied by a thorough description of the printing processes.<sup>181</sup> For this reason, each article of the magazine was printed by a different publishing house and then bundled together for distribution. The technical evolutions that had affected the printing industry in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries had not left Belgium untouched. Thanks to the initiative of publishing houses both francophone and netherlandophone, notable revolutions had taken place in the printing industry, especially aimed at improving texts with images. In particular, cities such as Brussels, Liège, Antwerp, Bruges and Tournai became prolific centers for the graphic arts.<sup>182</sup> The issue of *Graphica* of October 1948 presented a



**Figure 51:** Magnified text.

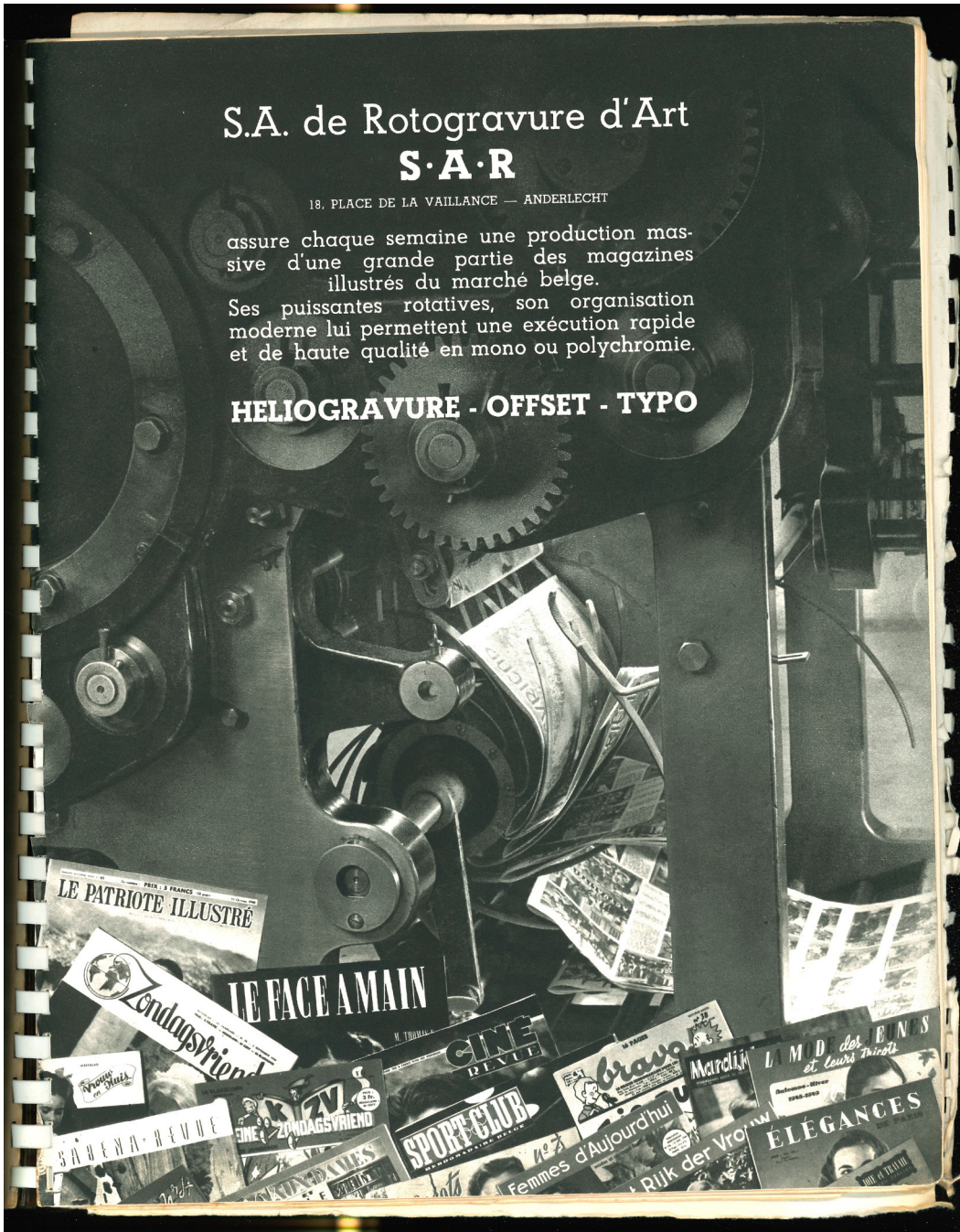


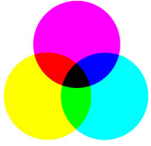
Figure 52: A promotional page for s.a. Rotogravure d'Art in the magazine Graphica, no. 29. Note at the bottom of the page the magazines *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*, *Het Rijk der Vrouw* and *Vrouw en Huis*.

very interesting promotional page (Figure 52). It concerns an advertisement for s.a. Rotogravure d'Art, a printing company that guaranteed the “weekly massive production of large part of the illustrated magazines of the Belgian market”, either in black and white or in color, thanks to its powerful rotary presses and modern organization. The first kind of printing the company offered was ‘heliogravure’, which is the French term for roto-gravure as described above. When looking closely at the magazines at the bottom of the image, some stand out: *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui*, *Het Rijk der Vrouw* and *Vrouw en Huis*. It seems plausible to infer that these magazines were first printed by s.a. Rotogravure d'Art, and then published by their own publishing houses, which, as seen in the previous chapter, were respectively s.a. Femmes d’Aujourd’hui, n.v. Het Rijk der Vrouw and De Vlijt. What is certain is that this page confirms the result of the analysis under magnification: that these magazines – and therefore the photonovels included – were printed in roto-gravure.

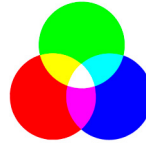
The technical advancements of the printing sector were followed by an increased need for specific products, also advertised in the pages of *Graphica*. Recurring advertisements concerned cylinders, inks, paper, and plates, films and chemicals. Rotary presses were also often advertised and some of them mentioned the possibility of integrating a roto-gravure printing unit.

### 4.2.3 Color printing

The photonovels of the first decade were usually printed in black and white. Only from the late 1960s did colored photonovels begin to appear and steadily earned more and more success. Color prints became not only possible, but also very common in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The principle of color printing relied, on the one hand, on the ability of “the three primary colours, magenta, yellow and cyan [...] to combine to form all other colours”,<sup>183</sup> and, on the other hand, on the possibility to create color separations. The colored image to be printed needed to be recaptured using red, green and blue filters in order to create the photographic negative color separations.<sup>184</sup> Each filter allowed only a third of the spectrum of colors, filtered through the red, green or blue channel, to be captured on the film – the red filter blocked out green and blue light, the green filter blocked out red and blue light, and the blue filter blocked out red and green light. The information captured on the three negatives was usually translated into grayscale. The negatives were then turned into three continuous-tone positives to be used to form the gelatin resists and etch the cylinders (one per color).<sup>185</sup> The three cylinders were then printed consecutively in complementary colors, relying on the principles of subtractive color mixing. Instead of mixing colored light (red, green and blue) to create a colored image (additive color mixing, RGB), the subtractive model used the three primary colors (cyan, magenta and yellow, CMY) to mask the red, green or blue light from white light in order to create the range of colors. In other words, cyan ink was used to print the image obtained through the red filter because it absorbed red light, magenta was used to absorb



**Figure 53:** Cyan, magenta, yellow: subtractive colors.



**Figure 54:** Red, green, blue: additive colors.

green light, and yellow to absorb blue light. Printing consecutively in the three subtractive colors built up the colored image.<sup>186</sup> When mixed at full strength, cyan and magenta inks produced the color blue, while cyan and yellow inks produced green, and magenta and yellow produced red, as shown in Figure 53; mixed all together, they produced an imperfect black. Therefore, in order to properly print the color black, obtain contrast and create shadowing, large quantities of ink were required. Note, in Figure 54, how the complementary colors of the additive model are cyan, magenta and yellow, and their combination produces the color white.

In modern printing, to the three primary colors a fourth color was often added: black, in this context called ‘key’. This was done in order to avoid having to mix the very large quantities of ink necessary to create the color black, and allowed for more contrast and precision in the grayscale and shadows. Four-color printing was effectively developed around the 1920s, but it was an expensive process and was therefore only used for large print runs, such as magazines. Especially in the 1950s, many popular magazines began to feature some pages in color, prized as the most beautiful color prints of the time.<sup>187</sup> However, the process entailed some difficulties and imperfections, which had to be fixed manually, so it only really took off once, in the 1970s, electronic scanners were introduced to take up the task of color separation.<sup>188</sup>

#### 4.2.4 Press printed photographs

While the technology to press print images developed in time and allowed for quality prints, differences between press prints and photographic paper prints nevertheless remained. The previous paragraphs have analyzed how the printing process of photobook images worked, highlighting how the technical aspects only marginally relied on photographic principles. More specifically, photographic techniques were only used when creating the printing matrix, but not when printing. The core of the difference between photographic prints and press prints is thus methodological: what varies is the methodology used to create an image. Photographic prints rely in fact on light-sensitive paper to make an image, while press prints are made by applying ink on paper.

The differences produced by the two ways of creating prints can manifest in various ways. First of all, when in color, photographic prints and press prints use different color spaces. A press print relies, as we have seen above, on subtractive colors, namely cyan,

magenta, yellow and black (called key), the CMYK color spectrum. Photographic prints, on the other hand, work with the additive model RGB, which uses red, green and blue light. A comparison of the two color spaces shows that the RGB model has a larger color spectrum than the CMYK one.

In the image, the RGB, Pantone and CMYK color ranges are compared to the colors the human eye can see. It is immediately evident that the RGB range is the closest to the visible color spectrum, while the CMYK range is about one-third of the RGB, capturing the least amount of colors out of the three compared models. When printing images, the amount of colors that can be achieved is essential. Photographic prints, relying on the RGB range, achieve the most colors, while press prints can encounter difficulties reproducing some colors. Although today the advancements in technology allow for high-quality color press prints, in the 1960s and 1970s this was not the case. Colored photonovels were therefore limited in the color range they could achieve and placed at a disadvantage when compared to photographic color prints. A similar difference could also be distinguished in black and white images, which represent the majority of photonovel images. Having a more complete color spectrum, the possibility of creating a scale of grays was broader in a RGB color space than in a CMYK one. The latter in fact rarely allowed for a truly black tone, producing instead a dark shade of grey. A limited grayscale also meant a limited possibility to render smaller details, which were given by the contraposition of different gray tones and were therefore often lost in press prints.<sup>189</sup>

The second substantial difference between press prints and photographic prints, due to the different methodology used to make the images, concerns the architecture of the printed image. A photographic print created with light and the broad RGB color range produces a smooth image characterized by even tonal variations. Conversely, a press print, such as the ones obtained by the rotogravure process, makes use of a screen to break up the original image into tonal variations in order to recreate the image and its gradations as closely as possible. The image is thus not made of a continuous and smooth variation in gradations, but of a pattern of tiny amounts of ink that, when combined together, trick the human eye into seeing a continuous image. However, as seen above, when the press print is magnified, this pattern becomes visible.

Stemming from the limitations in the color range and from the necessity of using a gravure screen is the third difference between the two kinds of prints. In order to create the patterned image on the carbon paper substrate, high contrast and sharpness were favored so as to help turn the tridimensional light that passed through the screen into a sharp two-dimensional result.<sup>190</sup> However, bright and intense colors could not be achieved and thus, once press printed, the result was an image that appeared flattened, with low contrast and little dynamics. That is to say that the dynamic range of a press print is much more limited in comparison to the possibilities provided by photographic prints.



Finally, the last difference is the paper used to print on. Though there exist many kinds of paper (smooth, matte or glossy, to name a few), the first element that sets them apart is that photographic prints always work with light-sensitive paper, while press prints use standard paper. Then, the paper chosen for photographic prints and press prints varies according to their use, which usually differs substantially. In the case of the photonovel, the paper used was that of popular magazines, namely a paper of poor quality, often uncoated and with visible paper fibers. This was a much more material kind of print, with a certain thickness, roughness and texture that provided a unique tactile experience. The texture of the paper also gave a grainy quality to the images, which is conversely not present on the generally smoother photographic paper. It should also be noted that these kinds of press prints were usually two-sided, contributing to a different resulting product.

An additional consideration has to do with the fact that while a photographic print is normally used to print one image, rotogravure was used to print a magazine page, which could be made of various images. This meant that the various photographs making up one page of a photonovel were not printed singularly, but together as one page and with text. As mentioned above, the rotogravure process needed a positive transparency in order to expose the carbon paper and form the resist for the etching. This transparency, obtained with a process camera, was not created by capturing one photograph at a time, but the page as a whole. The laid-out page was thus treated as one image, with a direct impact on the general quality of the various photographs constituting the page. As detailed as the process camera could be, small details were always lost in the process in favor of a homogeneous flattening of the image.

Figure 55 shows, on top, a photonovel image as printed in the magazine, and, on the bottom, the original photographic print. Note how the elements discussed above are visible: the press print has much less contrast and is more flattened, while the photographic print retains a higher dynamic range, which gives an impression of closer verisimilitude to what the human eye perceives; the press print presents a grainy texture and no sheen due to the paper used, while the photographic print is smooth. Many details are lost in the press print: of the polka-dot pattern on the tie of the man on the left, clearly visible in the photograph, nothing remains in the press print; the man on the right wears an elegant jacket with a waistcoat, but on the press print the tones of black and gray are not properly captured, rendering the jacket and waistcoat in the same flat black, making it impossible to distinguish the two pieces of clothing; the flower pattern of the wallpaper loses the sharpness of its features and becomes a blurry ensemble; even the picture on the wall, the wooden cabin clearly distinguishable in the photograph, becomes an abstract grey blotch.

The exhibitions “Roman-Photo” at Mucem in Marseille, France (December 13<sup>th</sup> 2017 to April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018), and, even more so, “Fotoromanzo e poi...” at Spazio Gerra in Reggio Emilia, Italy (April 20<sup>th</sup> to July 19<sup>th</sup> 2018), took a closer look at the photography of photonovels. Starting from the negatives of the photographs that made up photonovels, the curators



**Figure 55:** Comparison between photonovel press print (top) and photographic print (bottom). Richard Olivier (photographer), “Kidnapping en sol mineur”, in *Chez Nous*, February 12<sup>th</sup> 1971.

reprinted them with state-of-the-art photographic technology and in large sizes (Figure 56). The effect was striking: a single photograph, instead of press printed on a magazine page together with other five or more photographs, was now printed on a photographic substrate and enlarged to a hundred times its size. This allowed for an appreciation of the individual image, extrapolated from its original context, and the discovery of the small details, usually lost in the original reduced size and press print. Both exhibitions disclosed the beauty and quality of many of the photographs taken for photonovels, showing how the low quality of the printed images on the photonovel page was often not due to mediocre photographs, but to the technical limitations of press printing as described above.

From a purely photographic perspective, photonovel images as printed in popular magazines were not high quality or particularly appealing. However, the readers of photonovels did not judge the images for their photographic standards. The popularity of photonovels seems on the contrary to suggest that these images were appealing and much appreciated despite (or maybe because of) their low quality. If we consider the sentimentality of the genre, which aimed at telling a love story, the small format of the photographs, which were laid out next to each other on the page and mainly consisted of carefully composed close-ups, and the technical limitations of press printing, with the contrasted and grainy results, it is possible to notice that the three elements seamlessly matched and worked together to create the intimate look that was typical of photonovels' esthetics. Photonovels were made of images and text, and we can suppose that the quality and resolution of the images was not so central to the functioning or the reading of the photonovel. On the contrary, if we analyze the broader context of visual representation, it becomes indisputable how important and influential the images of photonovels and, more generally, popular magazines were on visual esthetics and visual culture more widely, despite their low quality.<sup>191</sup> What had begun with the invention of photography and an initial, still limited availability of images, was in fact furthered by rotogravure in that it allowed for the mechanical and mass reproduction of images in permanent ink, to be printed in magazines available for millions of readers. As Wright puts it:

*Photography has been credited with 'redefining the nature of artistic expression and information transfer', yet this iconographic revolution actually was accomplished largely by means of the medium's widespread reproduction. The development of various photomechanical technologies, culminating in the screened halftone, transformed both the production and the perception of photographs. The rise of mass media, incorporating this pictorial vocabulary into journalism, film, television and now the Internet, has changed forever the way the world communicates. Today's visual culture has its roots in photography's syntax into other media.<sup>192</sup>*

In her chapter on rotogravure, Turzio moves in a similar direction, noticing how publications in rotogravure became "an arsenal of material to look at" and "the pages to leaf



**Figure 56:** Image taken at the exhibition “Fotoromanzo e poi...”, Spazio Gerra, Reggio Emilia, Italy (April 20<sup>th</sup> to July 19<sup>th</sup> 2018) (Photo: Clarissa Colangelo).

through [became] an encyclopedia of forms”.<sup>193</sup> She quotes Michel Frizot and his *photographisme* to highlight the importance of technical innovations and developments for the esthetics of photographic images and for the way visual representation is read and understood. The printed images in rotogravure, although not photographically perfect, nevertheless connected with and enriched a growing tradition of visual presence in other media than photography and particularly in printed matter, and in the way this was viewed and read.<sup>194</sup> Turzio therefore urges us to think about a new way to categorize photographic genres that includes the images obtained by rotogravure as well.<sup>195</sup> In the closing remarks to her article, Wright highlights how easy it can be to praise photography as the sole protagonist of a visual evolution, forgetting the “necessary intervening role played by printed pictures and their influence in mass media.” As she puts it, “the history of photomechanics is a neglected but integral part of the story of visual culture [...] It was the extraordinary international effort joining photography with the printing press that is the basis of it all, for better or worse.”<sup>196</sup>

Concerning the specificity of photonovels, an additional reflection can be added to the discussion. Though it is clear that the quality of the images did not impact the success of photonovels, it cannot be ignored that the printing technology of the time did pose limitations to the achievable image quality. This is not to say that the history and

perception of photonovels could have been dramatically different had the images been of better quality, though one might wonder whether a better image quality could have meant a better perception of photonovels by, for example, photographic circles and, by extension, by the elites that despised photonovels so much. The reflection here is rather of a material nature. A large part of the literature on photonovels approaches the study of them in terms of the relationship between images and text, their sentimentality, their popularity versus the contempt they inspired, their readership, and their role and impact on society. The strictly material and technical elements of photonovels are a given, sometimes touched upon, but never fully at the heart of the discussion. However, what we see when we study photonovels is not just stories made of photographs and text that interested millions of readers, but also the magazine, the pages, the layout, the colors, the craftsmanship required to create them. In other words, we also study the material nature of photonovels, which has been determined by the tools, technologies and set of skills that were available at the time of production. To overlook this is to consciously set aside an integral aspect of the identity of photonovels.

## Notes

1. Román Gubern, *Medios icónicos de masas* (Madrid: Historia 16, 1997), 17. Original text: “las fotonovelas son productos industriales, independientemente de su significación cultural, lo que supone un proceso productivo que se inicia con un texto y culmina con la difusión en papel impreso. En tal proceso intervienen gran número de personas y se aplican varias técnicas.”
2. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 16.
3. *Ibid.*, 121, and Anelli et al., *Fotoromanzo*, 93.
4. Jan Baetens, Carmen Van Den Bergh, and Bart Van Den Bossche. “How to Write a Photo Novel. Ennio Jacobelli’s *Istruzioni pratiche per la realizzazione del fotoromanzo* (1956),” *Authorship* 6, no. 1 (2017): 6.
5. *Ibid.*, 7.
6. *Ibid.*, 11.
7. Respectively on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019, and February 13<sup>th</sup> and April 24<sup>th</sup> 2019. The interviews were followed by an email exchange.
8. An extremely interesting source in this regard is Ennio Jacobelli, *Istruzioni pratiche per la realizzazione del fotoromanzo* (Rome: Editrice Politecnica Italiana, 1956), 5. See Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 51. Jacobelli clearly shows that the production process of a photonovel has quite a few points in common with the traditional way of moviemaking. The book meticulously describes the different steps of the making of a photonovel, from the initial idea to the printing of the magazine.

9. Jacobelli, *Istruzioni*, 9.
10. Detti, *Le Carte Rosa*, 27, Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 41, and Saint-Michel, *Roman-photo*, 52.
11. Detti, *Le Carte Rosa*, 30, Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 41, and Sullerot, *Presse Féminine*, 113–114.
12. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 8.
13. Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 42, and Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 14.
14. Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 84.
15. The specific presence of photonovels inside the magazines is analyzed in more depth and with examples from the Belgian corpus in Chapter 5.
16. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 187.
17. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 14.
18. Anelli et al., *Fotoromanzo*, 93–94.
19. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 53.
20. *Ibid.*, 121.
21. A comparable example would be that of Raymond Cauchetier, a French set photographer turned into photonovel author and editor working for a Belgian-owned but actually very French magazine, *Chez Nous*, who also easily accepted the commercial and other constraints of the photonovel magazine business, which did not prevent him from doing artistically interesting work. See his personal testimony on his website: Raymond Cauchetier Photographie (raymond-cauchetier.com). Today Cauchetier is still very well known for his very original film photonovel version of Jean-Luc Godard's *À bout de souffle*, as serialized in the French newspaper *Le Parisien libéré* in 1969 and reprinted in Pinchon, *Contrebandes*. Yet a film photonovel, as we know, is definitely something other than a photonovel.
22. Jacobelli, *Istruzioni*, 10.
23. *Ibid.*, 10.
24. *Ibid.*, 11.
25. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 65, and Jacobelli, *Istruzioni*, 10.
26. Good surveys of the poetics of serialization can be found in the already mentioned works by Letourneux, *Fictions*, and Kelleter, *Serial Narrative*.
27. The exact number is 16.6. More on this in Chapter 5.
28. This is discussed in depth in Chapter 4.1.6.
29. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 43.
30. Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 84.
31. *Ibid.*, 85.
32. *Ibid.*, 84.
33. Bravo, *Fotoromanzo*, 25.
34. Baetens, Van Den Bergh, and Van Den Bossche, "How to Write a Photo Novel," 5.
35. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 52.
36. Jacobelli, *Istruzioni*, 15.

37. Interview with Michel Courant, May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019.
38. Sullerot, *Presse Féminine*, 102.
39. *Panorama*, although published both in French and Dutch, is here counted as one since the content of the magazine was exactly the same in both languages and photonovels were always direct translations.
40. The peculiarity of this last story has been discussed in Chapter 3.6.
41. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 74.
42. Padovan was a prolific author of photonovels for the French magazine *Nous Deux*. See Faber, Minuit, and Takodjerad, *Nous Deux*, 60.
43. The private database is property of Michel Courant, who devoted many years to its creation. Being a project born out of passion, it is possible that the information recorded is not complete nor always accurate.
44. Olivier confirmed the titles himself during a meeting with him on February 13<sup>th</sup> 2019, after we presented him with a list. It is possible that he created additional photonovels that, due to the lack of credits and the long time that has passed, we have not been able to identify yet.
45. See Chapter 3.8.
46. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 16.
47. Baetens, *Roman-photo*, 141.
48. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 75.
49. It should be noted that the shooting of a photonovel had nothing to do with what can be seen in Fellini's movie *Lo Sceicco Bianco*, which looks more like a film shoot than a photonovel shoot.
50. Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 87.
51. We can imagine, for example, that a professional photographer such as Federico Vender, who often hired the same models for his artistic shoots and his photonovels, made use of his studio space for the shooting of photonovels. For more on Vender, see Katia Malatesta, *Sul Set. Fotoromanzi, genere e moda nell'archivio di Federico Vender* (Trento, Exhibition catalog, September 8<sup>th</sup> – December 10<sup>th</sup> 2017).
52. Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 87.
53. From our interview with Richard Olivier, who admitted to belonging to the category of “wilder” photonovels' creators and photographers.
54. From our interview with Michel Courant on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019, who himself worked as an assistant with Huber Serra.
55. Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 86–87.
56. Phillip John Usher, “À bout de souffle: Trials in New Coherences,” in *A Companion to Jean-Luc Godard*, ed. Tom Conley and T. Jefferson Kline (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2014), 29.
57. Jacobelli, *Istruzioni*, 14.

58. Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 88.
59. More on these shots can be found in Jean-Claude Chirrollet, *Esthétique du Photoroman* (Paris: Edilig, 1983), 70–73, Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 88–90, Jacobelli, *Istruzioni*, 12–13, and Saint-Michel, *Roman-photo*, 31–33.
60. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 65.
61. Juan Miguel Sánchez Vigil and María Olivera Zaldua. “La fotografía en las fotonovelas españolas,” *Documentación de las Ciencias de la Información* 35 (2012): 43.
62. Saint-Michel, *Roman-photo*, 33.
63. Pedro Sempere, *Semiología del infortunio: lenguaje e ideología de la fotonovela* (Madrid: Felmar, 1976), 125. Original text: “Las fotos, más que tener una función narrativa con respecto al relato, tienen una función icónica o de cognición.”
64. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 58.
65. *Ibid.*, 60.
66. Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 88.
67. Ian Jeffrey, *Photography. A concise history* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2010), 9.
68. Chirrollet, *Esthétique*, 89.
69. From our interview with Michel Courant, May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019.
70. Jeffrey, *Photography*, 244–245.
71. <https://www.hasselblad.com/about/history/500-series/>.
72. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 95. Original text: “Ce qu’il avait de mieux que les autres, c’était qu’on pouvait lui ajouter un moteur, des chargeurs spéciaux, des objectifs nombreux, des viseurs, et surtout qu’on pouvait lui accoler un Polaroid.”
73. Jacobelli, *Istruzioni*, 20.
74. As Jacobelli explains, this cost could be calculated on the basis of how many photographs would be taken for the photonovel and adding to it a margin that took into consideration the possible bad shots. Jacobelli, *Istruzioni*, 39.
75. Mannheim, “Technology of photography. The latent image.”
76. Jacobelli gives a detailed overview of the various emulsions available. Jacobelli, *Istruzioni*, 24.
77. Mannheim, “Technology of photography. Other film characteristics.”
78. Anelli et al., *Fotoromanzo*, 96.
79. Jacobelli, *Istruzioni*, 35.
80. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 45.
81. Mannheim, “Technology of photography. Basic camera functions.”
82. Jacobelli, *Istruzioni*, 25–26 and 30.
83. *Ibid.*, 32–33.
84. Mannheim, “Technology of photography. Lighting technique.”
85. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 45 and 188.
86. Mannheim, “Technology of photography. Lighting technique.”



87. Mannheim, “Technology of photography. Filters.”
88. Jacobelli, *Istruzioni*, 21.
89. Mannheim, “Technology of photography. Filters.”
90. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 131.
91. *Ibid.*, 66.
92. *Ibid.*, 61.
93. *Ibid.*, 49.
94. Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 124.
95. Saint-Michel, *Roman-photo*, 149.
96. *Ibid.*, 148.
97. *Ibid.*, 148.
98. Anelli et al., *Fotoromanzo*, 95.
99. Saint-Michel, *Roman-photo*, 148.
100. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 65.
101. Anelli et al., *Fotoromanzo*, 95.
102. In the first years of the photonovel, the ideal of youngness was less accentuated, with also (mainly male) characters played by older actors.
103. Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 106–107, and Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 58.
104. Sullerot, *Presse Féminine*, 112.
105. Chirollet, *Esthétique*, 217–218.
106. Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 107.
107. Faber, Minuit, and Takodjerad, *Nous Deux*, 77–78.
108. See Chapter 4.1.3.
109. Faber, Minuit, and Takodjerad, *Nous Deux*, 83.
110. This topic has been discussed in Chapter 2. For more on this, see Denis and Klinkenberg, *La littérature belge*, 33.
111. See Baetens, *Film Photonovel*.
112. Faber, Minuit, and Takodjerad, *Nous Deux*, 77.
113. The interview took place on March 7<sup>th</sup> 2019.
114. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 60.
115. Jacobelli, *Istruzioni*, 41.
116. Saint-Michel, *Roman-photo*, 39.
117. Chirollet, *Esthétique*, 99–100. Original text: “Une suite de photos doit avoir une unité thématique: un sujet bien caractéristique, unitaire, doit apparaître à partir d’un événement précis (apparition d’un personnage, événement matériel modifiant le cours des événements, début d’une suite mémorielle, imaginaire, utopique, etc.).[...]. Cette unité est renforcée par l’unité de lieu et celle de temps, car il y a concordance entre le sujet abordé par la séquence, le lieu où il se passe, qui est facilement repérable aux indices environnementaux des personnages, et le temps durant lequel il se

produit. Généralement, un changement d'époque ou de moment est signalé par un changement simultané de cadre spatial, d'habits, de situations entre personnages. De même, un changement de mode mental du récit (passé évoqué, futur imaginaire, autre moment présent du récit) est signalé par une modification des objets et des personnages, ainsi que par des procédés photographiques appropriés, tels que la profondeur de champ totale ou les flous et les altérations chromatiques.”

118. Baetens, *Roman-photo*, 191.
119. Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 87–88.
120. *Ibid.*, 78.
121. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 126.
122. *Ibid.*, 100.
123. Saint-Michel, *Roman-photo*, 49.
124. Chirrollet, *Esthétique*, 101.
125. Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 78.
126. Sánchez Vigil and Olivera Zaldua, “Fotograffa,” 43.
127. Saint-Michel, *Roman-photo*, 38.
128. Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 82–83.
129. The type of language used is the one that can be found in serialized romance literature as well. Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 84.
130. *Ibid.*, 86.
131. Jacobelli, *Istruzioni*, 67–68.
132. Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 73. Original text: “diferentemente de outros produtos culturais, a reprodução da fotonovela não corresponde à simples multiplicação do original. Ao contrário, ela sofre um processo de tradução, adaptação e reorganização.”
133. *Ibid.*, 67.
134. *Ibid.*, 84.
135. *Ibid.*, 55.
136. See Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 35–39, and Saint-Michel, *Roman-photo*, 150–151.
137. Antony Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking. An introduction to the history and techniques* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 9.
138. *Ibid.*, 121.
139. For an in-depth discussion of these processes, see Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking*, and Jan van Dijk, *Herkennen Fotografische en Fotomechanische Procedés. Historische en moderne procedés en digitale afdruktechnieken* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2011).
140. Rachel A. Mustalish, “The Development of Photomechanical Printing Processes in the Late 19th Century,” in *Topics in Photographic Preservation* 7 (1997): 73–87.
141. Helena E. Wright, “Photography in the printing press: the photomechanical revolution,” in *Presenting Pictures*, ed. Bernard Finn (London: Science Museum, 2004), 25.
142. *Ibid.*, 22.

143. Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking*, 121.
144. Wright, “Photography,” 26–27, and [http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process\\_id=364#overview](http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process_id=364#overview).
145. Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking*, 31.
146. Mustalish, “Photomechanical Printing Processes,” 78.
147. Wright, “Photography,” 26–27.
148. See “Etching” in Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking*, 56–71.
149. *Ibid.*, 121.
150. Mustalish, “Photomechanical Printing Processes,” 78.
151. Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking*, 90.
152. *Ibid.*, 90.
153. Wright, “Photography,” 33, and Mustalish, “Photomechanical Printing Processes,” 79.
154. Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking*, 121.
155. [http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process\\_id=364#overview](http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process_id=364#overview).
156. Van Dijk, *Fotografische en Fotomechanische Procedés*, 232. Original text: “Het principe van kunstmatig rasteren is dat een fotografisch beeld door een optische ingreep wordt opgedeeld in rasterpunten op gelijke afstand van elkaar. De diameter van elk rasterpunt correspondeert met de graad van zwarting van het origineel. Heeft het origineel op een bepaalde plaats bijvoorbeeld een waarde van 10% zwart, dan wordt dat door het rasteren automatisch optisch omgezet in een kleine zwarte punt met een diameter van 10% van het toegewezen oppervlak. De resterende 90% van het oppervlak blijft onbedekt en is het papierwit. Op voldoende afstand ziet men door de optische menging van zwart en wit 10% zwart oftewel lichtgrijs.”
157. *Ibid.*, 233.
158. [http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process\\_id=125](http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process_id=125).
159. Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking*, 124.
160. [http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process\\_id=125](http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process_id=125).
161. Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking*, 124.
162. Raffaele De Berti, “Il nuovo periodico. Rotocalchi tra fotogiornalismo, cronaca e costume,” in *Forme e modelli del rotocalco italiano tra fascismo e guerra*, ed. Raffaele De Berti and Irene Piazzoni (Milan: Cisalpino, 2009), 5.
163. [http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process\\_id=364#overview](http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process_id=364#overview).
164. [http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process\\_id=364#overview](http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process_id=364#overview).
165. Saint-Michel, *Roman-photo*, 150.
166. Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking*, 125.
167. *Ibid.*, 124.
168. [http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process\\_id=364#overview](http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process_id=364#overview).
169. <https://era-eu.org/about/>.
170. [http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process\\_id=364#overview](http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process_id=364#overview).

171. [http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process\\_id=364#surfaceview](http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process_id=364#surfaceview).
172. [http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process\\_id=364#overview](http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process_id=364#overview), but 1895 according to Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 35, and De Berti, “Il nuovo periodico,” 9.
173. De Berti, “Il nuovo periodico,” 13.
174. [http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process\\_id=364#overview](http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process_id=364#overview).
175. Van Dijk, *Fotografische en Fotomechanische Procedés*, 255.
176. <https://www.industriemuseum.be/nl/collectie-item/druktechnieken>.
177. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 37. Original text: “La pagina, semplice o doppia, viene ora composta su supporti trasparenti, posizionati su un tavolo luminoso, sui quali si può scrivere, incollare immagini, inserire caratteri più o meno grandi. Il testo può essere organizzato liberamente nella dimensione, nella posizione e nel colore, sottraendolo alla vecchia regola della colonna tipografica. A loro volta le immagini sono riportare nella dimensione e nella posizione desiderata.”
178. *Ibid.*, 38.
179. <https://www.industriemuseum.be/nl/collectie-item/druktechnieken>.
180. See Antoine Seyl, *Les Machines d’Imprimerie. Hier et Aujourd’hui* (Brussels: Imprimerie Scientifique et Littéraire, 1928).
181. *Graphica*, Brussels: Unigra, no. 29 (1948).
182. “Les Arts Graphiques” in *Graphica*, no. 29. Unfortunately the magazine does not include page numbers. This is the first article to be found in the section titled “Les Articles / De Artikelen”.
183. Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking*, 126.
184. *Ibid.*, 126.
185. *Ibid.*, 126.
186. <http://www.printernational.org/rgb-versus-cmyk.php>.
187. Van Dijk, *Fotografische en Fotomechanische Procedés*, 256.
188. Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking*, 127.
189. Chirrollet, *Esthétique*, 84.
190. Van Dijk, *Fotografische en Fotomechanische Procedés*, 233, and Chirrollet, *Esthétique*, 84.
191. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 38, and De Berti, “Il nuovo periodico,” 15.
192. Wright, “Photography,” 21.
193. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 38. Original text: “depositi di materiali da guardare” and “le pagine da sfogliare sono enciclopedie di forme.”
194. See Detti, *Le Carte Rosa*, which offers in this context an interesting overview of the evolution of sentimental imagery. For a more general overview on the (r)evolution of visual culture in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, see De Berti, “Il nuovo periodico.”
195. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 38.
196. Wright, “Photography,” 39.



## Chapter 5

# Photonovels inside the magazines

**H**aving discussed the making of and printing process of photonovels, this chapter returns to the relationship between photonovels and the women's magazines that printed (and in some cases produced) them. Photonovels, when published in weeklies in a serialized fashion, not only had a place, space and importance in the ecosystem of the magazine, but also interacted with the other contents of the magazines. This chapter tackles this topic in an attempt to understand the significance, for the magazine, of publishing photonovels as one of the elements that composed it. This is done by analyzing the presence of the photonovel inside the magazine, with particular attention given to its length, placement, stylistic unity and coherence, production, and promotion, in relation to the other elements that surrounded it and constituted the whole of the magazine.

Unlike Italy and France, which offered magazines entirely dedicated to photonovels, photonovels in Belgium usually shared their pages with all the other elements of the magazine. These were often grouped into categories in the table of contents of the magazine, two examples of which are given in Figures 57 and 58. The most common categories were: 1) fashion and beauty, with tips on seasonal fashion and articles on specific clothing items, on makeup, on hairstyles and on how best to care for one's body; 2) sewing, not only with dedicated articles but also with sewing patterns folded and attached to the centerspread of the magazine; 3) home or kitchen, with household advice, showcases of new furniture items, and recipes; and 4) articles and readings, which gathered articles on various topics (e.g. events, TV programs, celebrities, music, films and children care), short novels, either in their entirety or serialized, photonovels, contests for new talent, often searching for new actors or actresses for photonovels, letters from readers, humor pages and horoscopes.

The amount of pages dedicated to photonovels could vary substantially from one magazine to another, the number rapidly increasing or decreasing also in relation to the number of photonovels present in the magazine. A study conducted on five nether-



<p><b>LECTURES</b> <b>d'Aujourd'hui</b> l'hebdomadaire du sourire</p> <p><b>SOMMAIRE</b> N° 535 DU 1<sup>er</sup> DEC. 1962</p>		<p>LES OEUVRES IMMORTELLLES DE LA LITTÉRATURE FRANÇAISE</p> <p><b>PELLEAS ET MELISANDE</b> (1892) de Maurice Maeterlinck</p>
		
		
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<p><b>* VOTRE MAISON</b></p>		
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<p>Tous droits réservés pour les documents et les textes publiés dans Lectures d'Aujourd'hui et Disques d'Aujourd'hui.</p>		
<p>AVIS : Cet exemplaire de Lectures d'Aujourd'hui ne peut être utilisé à des fins autres que la vente au prix imposé et ne peut, en aucun cas, être compris dans un portefeuille de lecture, ni être donné en location.</p>		
		<p>Un jeune Gantois de vingt-sept ans, qui s'était inscrit au barreau pour faire plaisir à sa famille mais qui était bien décidé à se consacrer à la littérature, fut bien surpris un matin en lisant dans le Figaro un article d'Octave Mirbeau consacré à la Princesse Maleine, une pièce de théâtre qu'il venait de publier en compte d'auteur et qu'il n'avait même pas envoyée à l'écrivain. Il était imprimé noir sur blanc que Maeterlinck totalement inconnu avait du génie et que seul Shakespeare pouvait lui être comparé. Ces éloges contribuèrent à empêcher les parents de ce jeune homme à s'opposer à la vocation de leur fils qui encourageaient celui-ci à écrire d'autres drames pour marionnettes, comme il baptisait lui-même ses œuvres d'alors. Il est significatif qu'elles ne convainquirent aucun directeur de théâtre. A ce jour, la Princesse Maleine n'a encore jamais été représentée. Une pièce du même genre que Maeterlinck écrivit trois ans plus tard, Pelléas et Mélisande, eut quelques représentations. Mais elle tomba entre les mains de Claude Debussy qui, après dix ans de travail, en tira son chef-d'œuvre. Celui-ci eut des débuts difficiles. Entre-temps l'écrivain s'était lié avec la cantatrice Georgette Leblanc et il prétendit l'imposer pour le rôle principal. Debussy lui préféra Mary Garden. La veille de la première Maeterlinck désavoua dans la presse le musicien en affirmant que sa composition dénaturait le texte. La première fut houleuse. En plus de la cabale qui avait été ainsi montée, la majorité du public, incompréhensive, accueillit par des rires cette mélodie nouvelle. La critique se montra féroce. Ce ne fut que bien longtemps après que justice lui fut rendue. De son côté, Maeterlinck avait commencé à écrire des livres de philosophie et de vulgarisation scientifique tout différents, qui lui procurèrent la célébrité et la richesse et lui valurent le Prix Nobel. A la fin de sa vie, il déclarait ne plus rien comprendre à ses écrits de jeunesse. Par un phénomène inverse, ceux-ci commençaient seulement à être appréciés. Ces personnages qui n'appartiennent à aucun pays et à aucune époque, qui ne comprennent rien à l'aveugle fatalité qui les accable, qui ne réagissent pas devant la mort qui semble les attirer invinciblement, qui ne s'expriment que par des balbutiements, mais qui semblent être si sensibles en communication avec des puissances occultes, paraissent beaucoup moins étranges ou artificiels aux lecteurs des surréalistes et de Kafka qu'à ceux d'Arnold Toole France et de Tolstoï. Parfois le mystère et l'étrangeté sont amenés par des procédés un peu faciles, mais il n'en reste pas moins que Maeterlinck est un des rares écrivains qui ait réussi à communiquer au lecteur le sentiment de l'étrange et de l'insolite. La conscience que certains êtres ou certains objets ne trouvent pas à la place qu'ils devraient occuper, la notion d'un désaccord fondamental entre la vie et l'idée que l'homme s'en fait.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ALBERT GUITTOUX</p>
		<p>La semaine prochaine : CYRANO DE BERGERAC D'EDMOND ROSTAND</p>
<p>Responsable pour la publicité : « Publicité d'Aujourd'hui », 69, rue de Hennin, Bruxelles 5. Tél. : 47.26.13 - 47.25.73.</p>		

Figure 57: Example of table of contents. *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*, December 1<sup>st</sup> 1962.

# ons volk

weekblad voor het gezin — nr. 16 — 17 april 1970 — jaargang LIII

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Ons Volk is een uitgave van de N.V. De Standaard. Redactie en beheer: Emiel Jacqueminaan 127, 1000 Brussel. Telefoon: 02/18 14 50 (10 lijnen). Postrekening: 16479. — Reklame: Groep 1 Weekbladen, Bischoffsheimlaan 27, 1000 Brussel. Telefoon: 02/19 29 20. — Gedrukt in helio door de Drukkerij Periodica, Verantwoordelijke uitgever: S. Schoolmeesters, Keyenveldstraat 117, 1050 Brussel.

4



### PART-TIME ARBEID ?

De vrouw van nu en de arbeid. Waarom niet eens een soepele, praktische formule onder ogen gezien: part-time werk.

BLZ.  
10

### GESPREK OVER DE MENOPAUZE

Iedere vrouw maakt die periode, die moeilijke jaren ooit eens mee. Een dokter vertelt ons de waarheid hierover.

BLZ.  
16



### EEN JAAR VOL BLOEMEN

Speciaal voor alle bloemenliefhebsters maken wij een snijbloemenkalender, waar u praktische tips en ideetjes vindt.

BLZ.  
96



### KALINKA WORDT FILMSTER

Onze Vlaamse zangeres, die vooral roem oogst in het buitenland, gaat filmen. Waar en hoe dat vroegen we haar.

BLZ.  
128



Figure 58: Examples of table of contents. *Ons Volk*, April 17<sup>th</sup> 1970.



landophone women's magazines in 1964 by Veerle Peeters showed the following results for the year 1962: *Het Rijk der Vrouw* published a weekly average of eight pages dedicated to photonovels, with a towering number of 416 pages assigned to photonovels per year; *Mimosa* published each week an average of five and a half pages devoted to photonovels, reaching 280 pages per year; for *Vrouwen Huis* Peeters reports an average of one point three pages of photonovels per issue and sixty-seven pages in total for the year; finally, each issue of *Rosita* contained two pages of photonovels, reaching an average of 104 pages per year. Clearly *Het Rijk der Vrouw* contained a much higher number than the other Flemish magazines analyzed in the study. The photonovel section is shown to be one of the most regularly recurring sections of the magazine and the second most well-represented section of the magazine after news stories and articles. Conversely, *Vrouw en Huis* presented very low numbers in comparison with the other magazines analyzed. The regular presence of photonovels and the large space in each issue assigned to them are, according to Peeters, symptomatic:

*The amount of space allocated to a topic is an obvious sign of the editorial department's selection. The editor-in-chief assigns to articles and editorials a more or less large space at last, which in his or her opinion matches the importance of the themes and the interest of the readers in those themes.<sup>1</sup>*

An analysis of the corpus and particularly of the specific characters that defined the presence of photonovels in the magazines is essential in order to try and understand the importance and relevance of the photonovel inside these weeklies. While calculating the average amount of pages dedicated to photonovels per year is certainly an interesting and valuable way to analyze the presence of photonovels in the magazine, the results however are limited to generic numbers and say very little on the number of photonovels published weekly in the magazines – one episode of one photonovel or two or more episodes of as many photonovels? – or on how the numbers compare to each other when considering the total length of each magazine. If, for example, one magazine had an average of ten pages for photonovels, and another one three pages, it would seem obvious that the one with ten pages dedicated more space to photonovels; but if we considered the size of the magazines and noticed that, for example, the first had an average of thirty pages and the second nine, then the analysis would drastically change: photonovels would in both cases be dedicated one-third of the total pages of the magazine. For this reason, and in order to avoid similar bias and, instead, provide clear information as exhaustively as possible, the analysis that follows focuses on general trends rather than average amounts. This allows for a flexible exploration of the Belgian corpus, magazine by magazine, that is not limited to a specific year, but takes into consideration a variety of essential aspects: the space inside the magazine that is usually dedicated to photonovels, the number of photonovels

in each issue (that is, one, two or more episodes, each belonging to a different photonovel) and the variation thereof, the evolution and fluctuations over time, the production of the photonovels, and their promotion and advertisement in the magazine.

Following the order established in Chapter 3, the first magazine to be analyzed is *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*. The weekly published a total of sixty-nine photonovels over twelve years, from 1954 to 1966, with no interruptions or gaps between them. The photonovels mostly consisted of fifteen to twenty episodes. From 1954 to 1960 the magazine presented alternatively one or two episodes of photonovels in each issue. The tendency was to start with one photonovel and then add an additional photonovel to run in parallel to it; once the first photonovel ended, the second would run alone for a few episodes, until a new one was added. When the magazine featured one photonovel, the number of pages allotted to it would generally be four; when there were two photonovels, they were usually given four and three pages respectively, for a total of seven pages dedicated to photonovels each issue. The photonovels were placed either at the beginning of the magazine or towards the end, if only one was published, or one at the beginning and one at the end if two photonovels were running in parallel. In 1960–1961 the photonovels decreased to one episode per issue, the ending of a photonovel and the start of the following one often in the same issue. From 1962, however, the number of photonovels suddenly increased to three episodes per issue, on rare occasions decreasing to two if the third photonovel had just ended and a new one had yet to begin. The pages dedicated to photonovels would then range from twelve to fifteen, with episodes of three, four, five or even six pages. The placement would still tend to be at the beginning and end of the magazine, with the addition now of an episode in the middle as well. The addition of a photonovel episode each week went hand in hand with an increase in the size of the magazine, which went from around sixty pages to eighty or more. It should be noted that within the same photonovel, the episodes could vary in length: episodes of usually four pages could suddenly be three or five pages for a few weeks, before going back to four. Similarly, while the general position inside the magazine remained constant, the precise pages were not entirely fixed: episodes that generally appeared from pages four to seven could also suddenly move to pages five to eight or six to nine. This variation was, however, minimal, and does not undermine the general impression of uniformity and unity of the photonovel section in this magazine. All of the photonovels published in *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* were also produced by the magazine, which had a hired author of photonovels, and highlighted and promoted with short articles or announcements the upcoming photonovels, both in the magazine and on the cover. This testifies to the willingness of the editors to offer photonovels to the readers and their importance within the magazine – photonovels were seen as an integral and essential part of the magazine that contributed to its success and popularity. The sister magazine of *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*, the Flemish *Lectuur voor Allen*, only featured nine photonovels from 1954 to 1956. These were all exact translations of the photonovels in *Lec-*

*tures d'Aujourd'hui*<sup>2</sup> and were published on the same dates and pages inside the magazine. Therefore the observations recorded for *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui* are valid for the photonovels in *Lectuur voor Allen* as well: an alternation of one or two photonovels at a time, generally running to four pages (one episode per issue) or seven (two episodes per issue), at the beginning and/or end of the magazine. Interestingly, the production of these photonovels was not by *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*, but *Lectuur voor Allen*, testifying to the fact that the two magazines worked as one entity, at least in relation to the photonovels.

The magazine *Mon Copain* only published one photonovel of sixteen episodes in 1955, amongst a series of drawn-novels. The photonovel presented episodes of two pages placed variably inside the magazine. As noted in Chapter 3.2, the end of the photonovel coincided with the disappearance of the magazine from the market. One could wonder whether the addition of the photonovel had been a last-ditch effort to keep the magazine afloat on an increasingly competitive market, to no avail.

Starting from 1955, *Chez Nous* and *Ons Volk* began publishing photonovels – the same in both magazines,<sup>3</sup> always printed on the same dates, although not on the same pages and with obvious differences in the translations, as seen in Chapter 4.1.7.<sup>4</sup> Photonovels were published without interruptions until 1976, for a total of eighty-four photonovels in *Chez Nous* and eighty-three in *Ons Volk*. The presence of photonovels in these magazines, although continuous, presented visible differences in the length of the photonovels. The first three photonovels were extremely long, the first featuring an unusual total of forty-five episodes – the longest photonovel in the Belgian corpus, if we disregard the photonovels published in *Joepie* in recent years. The length of the photonovels decreased and increased for many years without an apparent search for uniformity within the magazine, going from photonovels of four episodes to ones of thirty, until the late 1960s, when photonovels received a more even appearance. For the vast majority of the years when the magazine published photonovels, only one photonovel at a time was present in the weekly. However, from mid-1958 to the end of 1961, two photonovels started running in parallel each week. This phase was followed by a period of five years of relatively short photonovels of four to twelve episodes, published consecutively. The number of episodes then increased and began fluctuating once again until, starting from 1967, it settled at around the sixteen episodes. The number of pages dedicated weekly to photonovels was subject to a similar, uneven evolution: at first each episode ran to two pages, then it increased mid-photonovel to three pages; when two photonovels ran in parallel, the number of pages devoted to them was generally six, rarely seven; from 1962 the number fluctuated between two and six, changing from week to week even within the same photonovel; finally in 1967 it settled on four pages of photonovels per issue. The placement of the photonovel inside the magazine also changed over the years, moving from the beginning of the magazine to the middle and then to the end pages. Similarly to *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*, the size of the magazine saw a steady increase in the number of pages

composing it, going from around thirty to eighty or more. Details on the production of the photonovels were scarce, with only two (the agencies A.L.I and European Press) mentioned once. From our interview with Richard Olivier, we know that he made the photonovels independently and afterwards sold them directly to the weekly. This and the variety in length and looks of the photonovels seem to confirm that the magazine did not work with an in-house author of photonovels, but rather bought the photonovels either from agencies or directly from authors. Compared to *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*, photonovels in *Chez Nous* and *Ons Volk* were without doubt a cherished element of the magazines, as testified by their constant presence in the magazines and the numerous announcements about the upcoming photonovels, but lacked a general sense of uniformity at least until the late 1960s.

Certainly central for the magazine were the photonovels published in *Het Rijk der Vrouw*, as noticed by Peeters for the year 1962, and a few years later in its francophone counterpart *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*. Serra wrote in his autobiography about the exceptional interest that the editors of the magazine, Rosita Verbeek and Marthe de Prella, had in the photonovel section. This was seen as a selling point of the magazine, able to help increase the sales of the weekly.<sup>5</sup> It is no surprise that the same editorial view was maintained by *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui / Lectuur voor Allen*, magazines closely connected in terms of publication, editors, contents and vision to the more popular *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw*. The importance of the photonovel for the redaction is mirrored by its features and presence within the magazine. *Het Rijk der Vrouw* published a total of 102 photonovels between 1957 and 1985, without interruptions. *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* presented photonovels from 1960 onwards and reached a total of ninety-two by 1985. From 1957 to 1961 *Het Rijk der Vrouw* published one photonovel episode each week. As discussed in Chapter 3.4, these photonovels were translations of photonovels published in *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*, whose netherlandophone counterpart had ceased production to be integrated into *Het Rijk der Vrouw*. The production of these photonovels was, however, by *Lectuur voor Allen*, once again translating the production credits of what were without doubt photonovels produced by *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*. Starting in 1962 and with only very few exceptions, photonovels doubled their presence in the magazine, with a steady two episodes per issue until 1972. This was followed by a period of five years during which the number decreased to one photonovel, published in an 'overlapping' fashion: the last one or two episodes of one photonovel would be published together with the first and second episodes of the new photonovel. From mid-1977 to 1985 only one photonovel at a time was published, the new one beginning in the issue following the end of the previous photonovel, avoiding any kind of overlap between the two. The majority of these photonovels were created by the same person, Hubert Serra, giving a sense of uniformity to the production. The photonovels tended to consist of seventeen to twenty-four episodes, making for a very balanced presence over the years. In general, many pages were allotted to photonovels in order to

meet the readers' expectations.<sup>6</sup> In the first years there were four pages per episode, which doubled to eight once two photonovels began running in parallel. The number remained stable when two episodes were published in each issue, while it increased to six pages per episode when only one photonovel was published, until 1982. From then on, the majority of photonovels decreased to the initial four pages per episode, as a testimony to the difficulties that the magazine as a whole was facing in staying relevant in a changing society. It is in fact important to highlight that the size of the magazine had increased over the years and while in the late 1950s it had four pages dedicated to photonovels out of a total of around eighty pages, by the 1980s the size of the magazine had doubled. The photonovels published in *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* followed an identical pattern to those in *Het Rijk der Vrouw*, especially starting from 1963, when only photonovels by Hubert Serra were published in both magazines, always on the same dates. The pages inside the magazines could vary as the content was not the same, but the photonovels were nonetheless placed similarly inside the magazine, usually in the second half and towards the end of the issue. Upcoming photonovels were often promoted in the magazine, which could even present articles on the shooting of the photonovel and a focus piece on the actors or models; issues containing new photonovels also often promoted the fact on the cover of the magazine. The production of these photonovels was by *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*, as Serra was the sole author of the photonovels in the magazine and he was employed by the redaction. In *Het Rijk der Vrouw*, however, the eighty-five photonovels made by Serra and translated into Dutch were presented as a production of *Het Rijk der Vrouw*. This shows, as in the case of *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui / Lecture voor Allen*, a close-knit relationship between the two magazines, which, at least on the level of the photonovels, truly worked as one entity with two names. What we can imagine was the task of the team at *Het Rijk der Vrouw* was to translate the texts of the photonovels into Dutch and re-do the lettering.

Both *Bonnes Soirées* and *Mimosa* dedicated many pages to the section devoted to "readings". In addition to short novels and serialized stories, photonovels also fell under this category. As seen in Chapter 3.5, photonovels were not distinguished from film-photonovels and their publication was therefore intertwined. Both magazines began presenting photonovels and film-photonovels in 1957, up until 1969 in *Mimosa* and 1970 in *Bonnes Soirées*, for a total of ninety-nine and 104 respectively. If we exclude from the count the film-photonovels, *Mimosa* published thirty photonovels, and *Bonnes Soirées* thirty-seven. These were, in both magazines, interspersed among the film-photonovels, sometimes running in parallel to them, sometimes alternating. The result, if film-photonovels are not considered, is a patchy ensemble broken up by gaps every few weeks, giving the idea that photonovels were a sporadic element of the magazine that did not hold much importance. However, since the editors did not make a distinction between the two sorts of stories, it seems inefficient to consider them as separate elements as it might lead to false interpretations: the presence of photonovels and film-photonovels was steady over

the years and saw no interruptions. The photonovels were generally on the short side, only rarely reaching twenty episodes, most of them ranging around twelve or thirteen.<sup>7</sup> The thirty photonovels published in *Mimosa* can be found in French in *Bonnes Soirées* as well. The translations and layouts, however, presented differences,<sup>8</sup> and the publication dates largely varied, *Mimosa* following its French counterpart with a few weeks' delay. The amount of space dedicated to photonovels inside the magazine was the same in both weeklies and ranged around four or five pages per episode. Two photonovels were generally not published at the same time, although the combination of one photonovel and one film-photonovel seemed to be more common, especially around the years 1958 to 1964. In these cases, the total amount of pages dedicated to both the photonovel and the film-photonovel was eight. The placement of the photonovel inside the magazine could largely vary, with photonovels to be found variously at the beginning, in the middle or towards the end of the magazine. Credits concerning the production of these photonovels were rarely available. However, the few mentions that can be found sketch a picture similar to that of *Chez Nous / Ons Volk*: the magazine did not work with a hired author, but bought the photonovels from agencies. One of these was I.F.S. (International Feature Services), a press agency that worked with a variety of magazines and newspapers in providing articles, comics and photonovels. The author of these photonovels was Jacques Van Melkebeke, who worked for I.F.S. as editor and scenarist from the late 1950s, when the agency was still known as Real Presse.<sup>9</sup> What the photonovel meant for *Bonnes Soirées / Mimosa* remains somewhat unclear. On the one hand, it seems clear that the editors were not acquainted with these stories. If mixing up film-photonovels and photonovels was not uncommon in the 1950s, by the 1960s the terminology and distinction had settled. Yet the magazine never began to make a distinction between the two, maybe for lack of knowledge or interest. Moreover, the promotional and editorial pieces that advertised the upcoming photonovels always remarked on the general sterility and mediocrity of the genre, trying to frame their own photonovels as better than average. It is thus possible to suppose that the editors were not particularly moved by these stories, nor were they avid readers of photonovels. On the other hand, however, photonovels continued to be published for more than a decade, testifying to the fact that, although they did not find the favor of the editors, photonovels were nonetheless a required and expected element by the readers.<sup>10</sup> Their presence in the magazine therefore seems to stem not from an editorial choice in the belief that photonovels would represent an integral and essential element of the magazine, but from a calculated decision based on the readers' interests, the popularity of photonovels and the necessity to remain relevant and keep pace with the novelties of the time.

The magazine *Piccolo* began publishing photonovels in 1960 and continued until 1963, for a total of twelve photonovels. During this time a gap of six weeks can be found in 1961, between the end of the publication of *Piccolo*'s third photonovel and the beginning

of its fourth. Besides this interruption, the presence of photonovels in the magazine was extremely regular. The first two photonovels were longer, with a total length of twenty-one and twenty episodes respectively. The rest of the photonovels were much shorter, all of them running to about ten episodes. Photonovels were published consecutively, meaning that the ending of one would be followed, a week later, by the beginning of a new one. Their placement in the magazine and the number of pages dedicated to them were fixed: the first ten photonovels were always printed on pages thirty-nine to forty-one, each with three pages per episode, while the last two photonovels were printed from page forty-two to forty-six, each episode of five pages. The publication of *Piccolo* stopped suddenly in 1960, but its legacy was picked up the following week by the magazine *Tiptop*, which ran for only a few months and featured one photonovel. This photonovel was twenty-one episodes long, although the story was never concluded, as the “to be continued” at the end of episode twenty-one remained without any follow-up. Each episode had three pages and was placed around page thirty of the magazine, although the exact page number changed weekly. Unlike many other photonovels in the Belgian corpus, the ones published in *Piccolo* always credited the production, in this case the distributing agencies A.L.I. for the first four photonovels, and Real Presse for the rest. Given the regularity of the photonovels and the constant presence of the agency credits, the general impression is one of positive integration of the photonovel section within the whole of the magazine, supported by the editors’ belief in the importance of these stories both for the sales of the magazine and for the readers. This is also supported by the enthusiastic words by the editor-in-chief introducing the first photonovel published in the magazine<sup>11</sup> and the space devoted to the promotion of the upcoming photonovels. The fact that both *Piccolo* and *Tiptop* stopped being published seems independent from the photonovel, instead having deeper roots plausibly of an economic sort.

As seen in Chapter 3.7, the magazine *Vrouw en Huis* only presented seven photonovels from 1960 to 1963, published discontinuously and among stories with images. The photonovels were generally very short, with a total of about six episodes and only one, the last photonovel, reaching twelve. Each episode presented three pages for the first five photonovels, decreasing to two pages for the last two photonovels. The presence of the photonovel inside the magazine was defined by irregularity. On the one hand, there were gaps of a few weeks when no photonovel was published. On the other hand, the placement of the photonovel in the magazine was not fixed and greatly varied even for episodes of the same photonovel, which could be found sometimes at the beginning of the magazine, sometimes towards the middle and other times at the end. Peeters is rather critical of the content of these photonovels, affirming that the language and style were simplistic and superficial, and that the level of the stories was extremely low and contrasted with the tone of the rest of the magazine.<sup>12</sup> This might help explain why only sixteen stories, counting both photonovels and illustrated stories, were published in this timespan. It

seems plausible to affirm that the presence of these stories in the magazine was not particularly important for the editors, who made no attempt at continuity, but instead published them irregularly and without a sense of unity with the whole of the magazine. The impression one gets is that of a bland pressure to publish these sorts of stories because of their popularity, but with no direct interest in them or even willingness to choose the best the market had to offer, let alone produce them themselves.

A similar situation can be seen for the magazine *Panorama*. Between 1961 and 1964 ten photonovels were published by *Panorama* both in Dutch and in French, on the same dates and with no visible differences. In one case, the end of a photonovel coincided with the beginning of the new one; for all the rest, one photonovel would end and a week later a new one would start. Each issue only dedicated two pages to photonovels, placed variably inside the magazine. Except for a shorter photonovel of ten episodes, all the others ranged between fifteen and eighteen episodes. Promotional messages would generally advertise the upcoming photonovels. The production of all ten photonovels was by Real Presse, which meant that the photonovels were bought through the agency instead of being made specifically for the magazine. However, unlike *Vrouw en Huis*, the editors always tried to create a sense of uniformity by editing and reworking the photonovel pages they received from Real Presse, as discussed in Chapter 3.8. Moreover, the photonovels bought by the magazine all featured suspenseful and detective stories, clearly indicating a specific idea for the kind of photonovels the editors wanted to publish. All these elements point to a unified vision concerning the presence of the photonovel in the magazine, which needed to be coherent not only stylistically, but also content-wise, and an integrated element among all the others that composed the weekly.

The presence of photonovels in *Rosita* might seem at first sight similar to those in *Panorama*, but the conclusions we can draw differ. The magazine published seven photonovels between 1962 and 1966, both in Dutch and in French. These were identical and always appeared on the same dates and pages within the magazine. The peculiarity of *Rosita*'s photonovels was that they were very long, with thirty or more episodes. They were published one at a time and consecutively – once one finished, a new one would start a week later, sometimes preceded by a promotional message. The number of pages devoted to photonovels changed over the years: the first four photonovels had two pages per episode, while three pages per episode can be seen for photonovels five and six, and four pages per episode in the last photonovel. The placement of these pages inside the magazine was far from fixed, moving variously within the magazine. All photonovels were Real Presse productions. Only in the last one is it possible to spot a difference in the credits, which went from Real Presse to I.F.S., once the former agency split up and was picked up by the latter. Similarly to *Panorama*, the photonovels in *Rosita* did not necessarily revolve around the typical romance, although, according to Peeters, the mediocrity of the stories did not integrate well with the rest of the magazine.<sup>13</sup> Even though possibly



all of these photonovels had been created by the same person, Jacques Van Melkebeke, for Real Presse, there did not seem to be any effort on the editors' part to create a stylistic uniformity among the photonovels once placed inside the magazine, each presenting differences in the layout. The impression one gets is thus of a magazine that published photonovels because of some pressure from the readers, who expected to find these stories in the magazine, or to follow the fashion of the moment, but certainly not driven by an internal interest in making photonovels an integral part of the magazine.

The magazine *Ons Land met Iris* gives the best example, from the Belgian corpus, of utter lack of unity and uniformity among the photonovels published by the magazine and between the photonovel section and the rest of the magazine. The weekly published twenty-one photonovels between 1963 and 1972. They generally appeared one after the other, but there are two major gaps, of nine and four months respectively, when no photonovels were published. The second story was not entirely a photonovel, presenting instead a series of images with captions underneath that recounted the story; the magazine made however no distinction between this illustrated story and the other photonovels. The number of pages dedicated to each episode was two until 1968; photonovels seven, ten, eleven and twelve were published in a smaller format, which meant that the two pages were not occupied exclusively by the photonovel, but also by other content (articles and advertisements) spread around it. From mid-1968 onward, the magazine found a creative solution to decrease the number of pages of photonovels to one: each episode had two pages, but these were published vertically on the page, in a small format, which obliged readers to turn the magazine to be able to read the photonovel. The length of the photonovels widely varied, going from nine episodes to thirty-eight with no apparent attempt at uniformity. The look and layout was also variable. Most of the photonovels were either Real Presse or I.F.S. productions, confirming that the magazine did not rely on an author specifically hired for this job, but bought the photonovels through agencies. It seems safe to assume that the photonovel element of the magazine was of very low importance. It had probably been added because of the general popularity of photonovels, but was clearly not an element promoted by the magazine to increase its sales.

Between 1966 and 1968 the magazine *Madame* offered readers two consecutive photonovels of fifteen and sixteen episodes respectively. The first photonovel had episodes of three pages each, to be found around page thirty of the magazine. The space dedicated to the second photonovel was of four pages per episode, generally placed from page thirty-two to thirty-five, except for episodes four, five and six: here the placement in the magazine suddenly changed and the number of pages per episode decreased to two. The magazine itself had a very short life, which could justify the presence of only two photonovels in total. Typical of such a competitive market was the appearance and disappearance of magazines, which were published for a few years and, if the publishing company deemed their success too little to justify the expense, their publication was put to a stop.

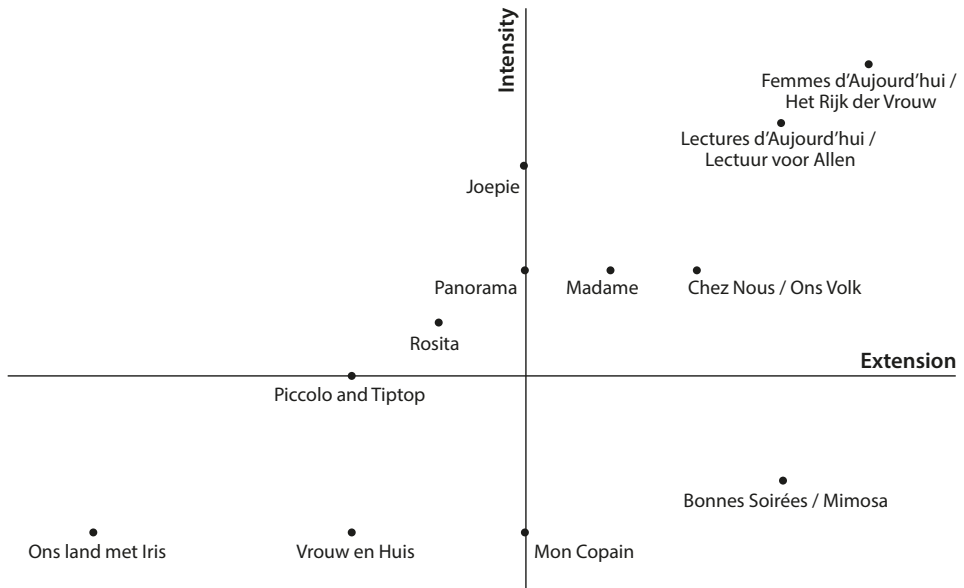
For the case of *Madame*, the photonovels integrated seamlessly with the contents of the magazine, the first one more conservative and the second one mirroring the attempts to give the magazine a fresher, more fashionable spin, as seen in Chapter 3.11. None of the photonovels featured specific production credits, but the second had general credits that identified Richard Olivier as the author of the photonovel. He had in fact directly sold this photonovel to the magazine and the editors had published it preceded by a promotional message that introduced the photonovel and its relevance in light of the changes happening within the magazine.

The last magazine on our list is *Joepie*. As discussed above, photonovels in *Joepie* can be categorised into three different periods, or ‘waves’, each presenting specific features. The first wave consisted of eight photonovels published between 1973 and 1977. They were all credited as *Joepie* productions. The length of these stories ranged between eight and eleven episodes, each of three pages. Only the last photonovel had shorter episodes of only two pages each. The photonovels were generally not published consecutively, but had gaps of a few weeks or months between the end of one and the start of a new one. They were usually preceded by a few words of advertisement, although the terms used to define them were ‘photo-story’ or ‘comics-story’, settling on ‘photonovel’ only in later years. Although not published consecutively, the importance of these photonovels is clear: they not only featured famous singers and bands to interest readers, but also served as advertisement for the singers and bands just launched by the record label Start Records. After a few years without photonovels and only occasionally a very short film-photonovel, the publication of photonovels began anew in 1987 and 1988, with eight new photonovels separated by gaps of few weeks. These stories had six episodes, each of two or three pages. Their placement in the magazine is difficult to pinpoint because the magazine often did not include page numbers, but it is nonetheless possible to notice that they were generally in the second half of the magazine, after the centerspread with TV supplements and posters. Typical of this (and the next) wave was that the end of each episode was marked by a little cliffhanger; a text box would give a sneak peek of a sentence extracted from the following episode, in order to create suspense and tickle readers’ curiosity. Two months after the last photonovel of this period, *Joepie* ceased publication. This was not for good, as the magazine resurfaced in 1996. A month after its rebirth, the third wave of photonovels began and lasted until 2014. Seven consecutive photonovels were published during these years. The first two photonovels presented the staggering figures of 160 and 202 episodes respectively, covering a period of seven years. They were placed around the center of the magazine and had five pages per episode. The following four photonovels were much shorter, with eight to thirteen episodes of two pages, always placed on pages sixty and sixty-one. The last photonovel was once again extremely long: always to be found on pages sixty and sixty-one, it lasted for 500 episodes, but was never concluded. This is symptomatic of the difficulties the magazine was facing, which culminated the following

year in a definitive halt to its publication. The photonovels of the third wave were clearly an integrated element of the magazine that contributed to its identity and marketing.

Figure 59 presents a visualization of the data here analyzed. The horizontal axis represents the ‘extent’, that is the bigger or smaller presence of photonovels inside each magazine. The number of pages dedicated to the photonovels each issue, the number of episodes for each issue, and the general amount of photonovels published by each magazine are all considered here. A greater extent is represented on the right side (*Femmes d’Aujourd’hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw*), while a lower one is on the left side (*Ons Land met Iris*). The vertical axis reports the ‘intensity’, to be understood as the bigger or smaller commitment of the magazine to the photonovels it published, based on the observations above – stylistic uniformity, promotion of the upcoming photonovels, in-house photonovel authors, unitary vision, integration with the rest of the content of the magazine, and so on. The higher the magazines are placed, the greater the commitment to the photonovel by the magazine, and vice versa. It can be noted that a larger presence of photonovels in the magazine does not necessarily correspond to a greater commitment from the editors: as analyzed above, some magazines seem to have included photonovels in their offer because of their popularity and readers’ expectations, but made no extra effort to integrate the photonovel into the magazine, to create uniformity among the photonovels or to buy photonovels of a higher quality. On the contrary, a high intensity rarely corresponds to a lower presence of photonovels, meaning that when the magazines decided to publish photonovels and integrate them into their overall strategy, this tended to result in a middle to high extent of the photonovel.

The analysis of the presence of photonovels in the various magazines of the Belgian corpus lends itself to a few considerations on the nature of the production and/or publication landscape of photonovels in Belgium. Writing about Brazilian photonovels, Bernardes Habert identifies three different business models within the publishing industry that printed photonovels: companies that worked with foreign material and therefore consisted of a limited number of editors and employees devoted to translations and adaptations; companies that focused on acquiring a large audience and therefore had a large in-house, professional team that took care of the material supplied by professional agencies and had expertise in mass communication; and companies that created first-hand the material they published. The author warns that in reality companies rarely applied strictly one model, but took various approaches. The way the companies worked is, according to the author, essential to understanding not only their development as capitalist businesses, but also their repercussions for the magazines themselves.<sup>14</sup> It is possible to identify a similar pattern for the Belgian corpus, strictly referring to the photonovel component of the weeklies: magazines like *Ons Land met Iris* bought their photonovels from agencies and published them as they were; magazines like *Piccolo* acquired their photonovels through agencies, but modified the general layout and lettering in order to



**Figure 59:** Visualization of the extension (more or less photonovels in the magazine) and intensity (more or less commitment to photonovels by the magazine) of the analyzed photonovels in the Belgian magazines.

better integrate the photonovel within the magazine; magazines like *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* produced their own photonovels to be published as an integrated part of the magazine. To these three models, there can be added an additional one, that of magazines like *Chez Nous / Ons Volk* that dealt directly with authors of photonovels, buying the stories from the source instead of through an agency. The reality, however, as Bernardes Habert notices, was often much more complex, with magazines that applied different models at once and the large variation that can be encountered over the years, plausibly following economic fluctuations as well as changes in the editorial board of the magazine and its general aims.

When the photonovels were produced internally by a Belgian magazine, the origin is generally straightforward: we are dealing with photonovels of Belgian origin and produced for the Belgian market. These were not always made by Belgian authors, but often by French ones as well, for example Hubert Serra. It should be noted that many of the francophone magazines published in Belgium were distributed in France as well, a strategy that often greatly increased the reach and revenue of the magazine. The situation becomes much less clear-cut when photonovels were distributed by agencies. The agency that provided the most photonovels to the Belgian magazines here analyzed was Real Presse, then known as I.F.S. as of 1966. This was a Belgian agency that made, bought and resold photonovels. While we know that the Belgian Jacques Van Melkebeke worked for this agency and authored many of the photonovels that were sold to the various magazines, it is difficult to

distinguish with certainty which photonovels were made specifically for the agency, and were thus of Belgian origin, and which were bought from French or Italian magazines. Most of the photonovels in fact lacked credits, many magazines edited and reframed the stories, and the translations tended to adapt foreign names and places, which could have provided an insight into the provenance, to more familiar ones. It is mainly thanks to our interviews with comics artist Jean-Pol and photonovel actress Marie-Christine Cabie that we could assign with certainty authorship of some of these photonovels to Jacques Van Melkebeke. It is to be hoped that further research might help identify some of the other photonovels distributed by this agency and further clarify this matter. As for the other agencies mentioned in our corpus, they were French, thus identifying the origin of the photonovels they distributed as French or, in general, non-Belgian. Finally, about half of the photonovels of the Belgian corpus remain uncredited. While it is possible to distinguish at times the origin of a photonovel based on specific details – license plates the editors forgot to blot out, landmarks, names that were not translated, etc. – it is often extremely difficult to make such a distinction based on the photonovel alone. Once again, further research that could cross-reference the corpus and compare it to similar lists from other countries might be able to trace photonovels across countries and shed some light on their place of origin.

This issue is complicated by the way the magazine industry, and particularly the one that published photonovels, operated in Belgium. Long before Belgian magazines began producing and/or publishing photonovels, Belgian readers were already acquainted with photonovels due to the circulation of foreign, and particularly French, magazines on the Belgian market. This was the case for example for the magazines *Nous Deux*, *A Tout Cœur*, *Festival* and *Madrigal*, with photonovels as of 1949, *Bolero*, with photonovels as of 1950, *Confidences*, with photonovels starting in 1952, and *Rêves*, with photonovels appearing in 1953. It is plausible to think that there might have also circulated photonovels from Italy, brought to Belgium by the many Italian migrants who arrived to work in the mines.<sup>15</sup> The popularity of these magazines and of the photonovel phenomenon certainly worked as a driving force to begin the production and publication of photonovels in Belgium. Once this started, Belgian readers could have their pick of the variety of magazines publishing photonovels, some of them still imported from abroad, many produced or published in Belgium. Moreover, as seen above, the majority of the Belgian francophone magazines began expanding to the French market as well. The permeation and exchanges between the two countries was a common aspect of these weeklies. It has been discussed that photonovels presented neutral characters that made them ideal products to import and export. Similarly, women's weeklies steered away from the latest news, left to newspapers and other sorts of magazines, and focused on content that could be easily transposed from one country to another. Thus, while the need to change and adapt some content was always present, the typical elements composing these magazines – the large presence of images, the lack of hard news in favor of soft news and their general accessibility – made their formulas universal.<sup>16</sup>

If we think in terms of the importance of the photonovel in the ecosystem of the magazine, it seems obvious that a magazine that produced its own photonovels deemed these stories essential for the identity and salability of the magazine. As discussed above, these magazines devoted a rather high number of pages to the photonovel section and integrated it seamlessly within the other content composing the magazine. Editors of weeklies could intervene on the decisions made by the authors of the photonovels, steering the direction and making sure that the stories aligned with the general scope of the magazine. However, this does not necessarily mean that weeklies that bought their photonovels from agencies found this component less important. There might have been very good reasons to resort to agencies instead of producing the photonovels themselves. The most straightforward was economic: buying photonovels from agencies was generally cheaper than paying a crew to make them specifically for the magazine. Although no contracts could be found between the agencies and magazines in our corpus, a few such contracts still exist for the French market, and we can infer that the prices would have been similar for Belgium. These were calculated on the amount of photographs sold, each image quoted around 2.50 French francs in the early 1960s. The price of one photonovel was therefore around 600 French francs, an amount lower than the average monthly wage in France in those years<sup>17</sup> and certainly lower than the expense required to maintain a team creating a photonovel. An additional reason to favor photonovels sold by agencies was the possibility of printing photonovels in which famous actors starred. The price required for the making of a photonovel with celebrities was prohibitive for many magazines, but buying such a photonovel from an agency was much more affordable. Once the photonovel was bought, the possible changes editors made to its layout in order to create a sense of uniformity with the rest of the magazine, the number of pages dedicated to photonovels and the promotional messages added to these pages are all a clear sign of a unified vision, where photonovels were as much part of the general sales strategy as the rest of the content.

Finally, bilingualism also played a role in determining the content of the magazine and the provenance of the photonovels. Peeters calls attention to the fact that, where photonovels were credited, there was a noticeable disparity in the amount of French and Flemish names, with the former making up the vast majority. While this could indicate a French provenance, Peeters warns that, when magazines had both a francophone and a netherlandophone edition, most of the content – thus not only photonovels, but also articles, short stories and so on – was created in French. For example, *Mimosa*, according to the author, consisted mainly of translations of material created for *Bonnes Soirées*, except for a few reportages and articles on specific works or institutions. The borrowed material had mostly to do with the reading section of the magazine, which included the photonovel. This practice was widespread and allowed the Flemish editorial staff to be kept to a minimum, therefore cutting the costs for personnel.<sup>18</sup> Looking back to the magazines here described, the case of *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw* and *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui / Lectuur voor Allen*

stands out. The content of these magazines could vary substantially between the franco-phone and netherlandophone editions, but the photonovels were always the same. They were created in French and credited as productions of *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* or *Lectures d'Aujourd'hui*, but in their Flemish counterparts the production credits were simply translated. Thus, despite the variation in content, which highlighted the willingness of the magazine to differentiate and better target its audiences, photonovels were perceived as a production of the magazine as a whole, which worked in unity notwithstanding the language barrier.

## 5.1 Photonovels and advertisement

When the photonovel was integrated seamlessly into the magazine, it interacted with its other elements, sharing in the esthetics, layout, composition, themes and so on. To exemplify what this interaction entailed, this section focuses on one of the most remarkable exchanges: that between photonovels and advertisements.

Women's weeklies offered fertile ground for advertising. They were in fact a visual-based medium whose very nature was anchored in the extensive usage of images, graphic elements and photographs, all elements that served advertisements well.<sup>19</sup> The large amount of advertisements was one of the characteristic factors of postwar women's weeklies. The content of the advertisements was wide-ranging and could include a variety of products (cleaning products, food, household electrical appliances, beauty products, medicines and remedies, clothing, cars, books) and services (to lose weight, gain muscles, enlarge one's breasts or get whiter teeth, in addition to educational opportunities and insurance),<sup>20</sup> although Bernardes Habert reminds us that a certain number of products were censored (alcohol, cigars, products perceived as harmful to health).<sup>21</sup> Such a large presence of advertisements was justified by the social context of the 1950s and 1960s. Women's weeklies were not only a source of information for their readers, but established a relationship with them based on feelings of trust and familiarity. Advertisements, which often offered tips and tricks, were published in a seemingly intimate environment such as these magazines offered, and were thus all the more influential and successful.<sup>22</sup> Conversely, this trust in the magazines pushed readers to disclose all kinds of information about themselves, which the magazines could then provide, along with their own results from market analyses, to advertising companies, offering all the necessary data for specifically targeted advertisements.<sup>23</sup> As Sullerot writes:

*If women now [in the 1960s] have such a plentiful and luxurious press, it is for the very good reason that sales specialists in almost every area of economic life have come to the conclusion that women do the shopping. About three-quarters of all purchases are actually made by "housewives". To sell you have to reach these wonderful consumers.*<sup>24</sup>



Figure 60: Pages 4 and 5 of the first episode of “Un mannequin a disparu” published in *Bonnes Soirées* on October 12<sup>th</sup> 1958. Note how photonovel and advertisements share the same page (© Dupuis).

Sullerot further notices that advertisements were not necessarily confined to the obvious advertisement pages, but that they often entered the editorial pages of the magazine as well. Although it is difficult to explicitly talk about product placement,<sup>25</sup> it is undeniable that the line between advertisements and editorials was often blurred. The editorials, and the photonovels as well, although not explicitly containing advertisements, nonetheless offered a showcase of products that were viewed and picked up by readers.<sup>26</sup> The amount of advertising in magazines was at times so large that readers complained about it in letters to the editors, asking that the advertisement pages be grouped in a specific section of the magazines. The request was naïve: the placement of advertisements inside the magazine was thoroughly thought out.<sup>27</sup> Advertisements were distributed throughout the magazine, between and often within the various sections, articles and stories.

When looking more specifically at the interplay between advertisements and photonovels, it is possible to notice that it generally occurred at three main levels: layout techniques, esthetic references and content. Where the layout was concerned, the magazine page became a medium for not only the photonovel page, but also advertisements; both elements were juxtaposed, and shared and lived within the same page. The two pages of *Bonnes Soirées* depicted in Figure 60 show an example of a photonovel and advertisements



Avec 2 pastilles  
**RENNIE...**



soulagez  
votre  
**ESTOMAC**  
en  
**2 minutes**

PARCE qu'elles sont anti-acides, calmantes et digestives, les Pastilles Rennie transforment instantanément l'acide de la fermentation en substance inoffensive. En quelques secondes les douleurs sont oubliées! Au dessert, 2 Pastilles Rennie! Goût de bonbon. Pharmacies seulement.

Pastilles  
**RENNIE**

**DISPARUS  
CES POILS**  
en 3 minutes  
Voici la meilleure méthode



C'est insensé de ruiner votre charme par des poils disgracieux sous les bras. C'est également insensé de les raser. Le rasoir irrite la peau et fait repousser les poils plus vite et plus drus. La femme moderne utilise la nouvelle crème VEET. Appliquez VEET, laissez-la pendant 3 minutes, rincez. Tous les poils ont disparu comme par magie. Votre peau est douce et satinée et... VEET retarde la repousse. Utilisez VEET pour vos jambes aussi. En vente toutes pharmacies et parfumeries. Le tube Fr. 30.-. Le tube géant (plus du double) Fr. 50.-. VEET crème dépilatoire rapide.



PERMANENTE A LOTION CRÉMEUSE  
**Prom**  
La "haute coiffure" chez soi, si facile à réussir!

67,50



**BON** pour une documentation gratuite. Renvoyez ce bon au "Centre de la Permanente chez soi" 63, rue Defacqz, Bruxelles. Vous recevrez la brochure illustrée "Coiffures nouvelles" vous indiquant comment couper vos cheveux comment les soigner et obtenir facilement la plus belle des permanentes.

Nom : .....  
105 Adresse : .....

UNE HEURE PLUS TARD, JEANNE ARRIVE CHEZ LA FEMME A LAQUELLE ROGER REND, PARAIT-IL, VISITE TOUTES LES SEMAINES.

VOUS DESIREZ, MADEMOISELLE?

MADAME MONTARDET, S'IL VOUS PLAÎT?



ANXIEUSE, JEANNE MONTE LENTEMENT L'ESCALIER ETROIT ET SALE QUI LA MENE VERS UNE VERITE QU'ELLE CRAINT.

QUEL GENRE DE FEMME VAIS-JE TROUVER?



MADAME MONTARDET, JE PENSE?

OUI, MADEMOISELLE.



Figure 61: Example of correspondence between photonovel and advertisement, in this case in the hairstyle of the two women. "Retour de flamme", *Bonnes Soirées*, June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1958 (© Dupuis).



Figure 62: Blurring between the actresses of the photonovel and the figures in the illustrations (all of them in the immediate proximity of advertisements like the one shown in Figure 62). “Retour de flamme”, *Bonnes Soirées*, June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1958 (© Dupuis).

sharing the same page. The photonovel only occupies the left half of page 55, continuing from the previous pages. It is then interrupted by advertisements on the other half of the page and on page 56, and it continues on page 57, where it once again only occupies the left half of the page. The right halves of pages 55 and 57 are dedicated to advertisements. Although the reader is reminded to turn the page (“Tournez la page” at the bottom of the photonovel on page 55), the reading is nonetheless disrupted as the reader’s eye moves from the fictional half-page of the photonovel to the non-fictional half-page of advertisements and then back to the photonovel. The fictive events of the photonovel and the facts of the advertisement meet on these two pages. Although the line drawn between the two is visible, the layout is busy and does not facilitate a fluent reading of these pages.

Esthetic references between photonovels and advertisements can be found in the following examples. The hairstyle of the woman in the photonovel (Figure 61, right-hand-side) is mirrored exactly by the hairstyles displayed in the two commercials next to the photonovel. In the same way, the female protagonists of the same photonovel in Figure 62 could easily be mistaken for a model for the characters of the illustrated short on the opposite page. The correspondence is obvious: the advertisements seem to select spe-



Figure 63: Hybrid photonoval-advertisement published in *Ons Volk* on January 27<sup>th</sup> 1966.

cific elements of the photonovals and make them available to the readers, showing them what kind of products were needed to look like a photonoval star (and the match with the illustrated short story reinforces this correspondence, since many advertisements were still drawings, not photographs). Conversely, the photonoval became the showcase of these products, offering readers a display of what the final result could look like. This straightforward interaction between photonoval and advertisement makes one wonder whether the photonoval, more than anything else, was there to reinforce the message of the advertisements.

On the boundary of hybridization of photonoval esthetics and content are the typically Belgian examples of Figures 63 and 64. Figure 63 depicts what at first sight might seem to be a regular page of a photonoval (on the left), which continues on the next page (on the right). However, a closer look shows that this two-page photonoval is actually an advertisement for the laundry detergent Tide, disguised as a photonoval. The advertisement develops a narrative that mirrors a typical photonoval pattern, characterized by love, jealousy and the presence of an obstacle: a young woman has to play her first tennis match and is nervous; her adversaries make fun of her, commenting on her clothes and on the presence of the love interest as a spectator; the woman loses the match and fails to catch the attention of her love interest; she goes back home and wonders about the comments she received on her clothes. That this is not a typical photonoval becomes clear only once the



**Figure 64:** The last episode of the photonovel “Het gezicht uit het verleden” is interrupted by a page of photonovel-advertisement. *Rosita*, June 28<sup>th</sup> 1966.

reader reaches the second page, where the detergent is finally discussed and depicted. The narrative here deviates from the usual photonovel story in order to highlight the product and its effectiveness. This is cleverly done by portraying a conversation between the protagonist’s mother and another mother, who suggests trying out the detergent Tide for the whitest laundry. The figure of the mother, as the unquestioned embodiment of the housewife, is the ideal character to provide such advice, speaking loud and clear to the readers as well. That Tide works is confirmed by the end of the page, where the advertisement falls back into a photonovel narrative: the young woman wins her tennis match, in this case thanks to her brightly white clothes, and manages to catch the eye of the love interest.

A similar case can be seen in Figure 64. Here the left-hand page is a genuine page of a photonovel that seems to continue on the right-hand page. Looking closely, however, it can be noticed that the right-hand page is not a continuation of the left-hand page, but what looks like a whole new photonovel. Once again it is not the story, but one of the images – in this case the first of the last tier – that shows the real nature of this page: it is not a photonovel, but an advertisement for the dishwashing liquid Pril. While the photographic style and number of images per tier is the same, when looking at these two pages the reader is made aware of a disruption of the photonovel only due to layout differences. The size of the photonovel images always remains the same, except for the top left of the page where we find the title and the summary of the story; the photographs are arranged



Figure 65: Correspondences between the photonovel on the right and the advertisement on the bottom left. “De terugkeer”, *Piccolo*, November 6<sup>th</sup> 1960.

in a simple grid, surrounded by a black frame, and the texts are handwritten. Conversely, the images of the advertisement are of various sizes, forming a much less rigid grid; the texts are typed and there is a simple headline at the top of the page. This sort of flexible layout was very common in photonovels and would not have alerted the readers to the inherent difference of this page. As noted above, it is only the moment the detergent is depicted that the advertising nature of the page is clarified. Interestingly, this advertisement was placed in between the photonovel episode, which continued on the next pages, although no indication reminding the readers to turn the page is present.

Taking the form of a photonovel opens up for advertisement what is normally a fictional world, that of the photonovel. Conversely, the presence of ‘photonovel’ advertisement unlocks a layer of reality for photonovels, which, instead of being secluded to their fictional world, seem now able to address readers on the same level as advertisement. This interplay between photonovel (fictionality) and advertisement (non-fictionality) is further strengthened by cases such as the one in Figure 65. Here the impression is that the photonovel and advertisement dialogue with each other and explore the same themes. On the right-hand page we see the first page of the fifth episode of the photonovel “De Terugkeer”. By this episode readers already know all of the characters and can easily follow what is happening: the main male character wants to defend the girl he loves, and who loves him, against her tyrannical father. He is portrayed as a caring hero, doing what

a 'real man' would do. The advertisement on the bottom half of the left-hand page taps into the theme and claims emphatically to be able to make men big and strong and turn them into the 'real men' girls dream of. The correspondence is unmistakable.

The varied interaction between the two elements of the magazine, (film-)photonovel and advertisements, has been analyzed by Jan Baetens in terms of text and paratext, highlighting a peculiar flexibility in the relationship between the two, typical of magazines. In this context of fluidity between text and paratext, advertisement is central. What is of interest is not (only) the content of the advertisements, but their relationship with the text, which can cause "confusion between the 'facts' of the advertisement and the 'dreams' of the fiction".<sup>28</sup> In the examples analyzed above, where the text is the photonovel and the paratext is the advertisement, we have seen how easily the two blur the boundary: the paratext shares the same page as the text in equal measure, disrupting a linear reading of the text; the paratext disguises itself as a text, adopting the text's own characters and narrative style; the theme of text and paratext corresponds, leading us to wonder whether we are reading the paratext in function of the text or vice versa; and finally, the esthetics of text and paratext are so similar that "one can even gain the impression that the [...] photonovel is only there to support the paratext that surrounds it."<sup>29</sup> In general terms, we can affirm that photonovels, while remaining in the realm of fiction, manage to depict a certain reality: one that not only spreads the message that if one works hard, leads a pious life and follows their heart, they will get their happy ending, but also one that is filled with coiffed hair, fashionable clothes, the latest appliances and fancy cars. A sort of ideal life that, reiterated from one episode to the other and from one photonovel to the next, contributes to creating an idea of (consumerist) lifestyle. Advertisements, which act on a nonfictional realm while closely dialoguing with photonovels, make that lifestyle purchasable by providing the means to buy or achieve all that seems essential for an affordable amount of money – bigger breasts, the perfect body shape, longer eyelashes, fashionable clothes, coiffed hair and so on. The way this interaction works is far from linear; it blurs the line between advertisement and photonovel to the point that the moment we seem to understand their role and function is also the moment when we realize that there is no unambiguous role or function. It goes without saying that the magazines that presented such a clear interaction between their parts dedicated time and thought to the general composition of each issue, locking the photonovel into a larger system of references.

## Notes

1. Peeters, *Weekbladpers*, 160. Original text: “De oppervlakte die een onderwerp toegewezen krijgt is een in het oog springend teken van uitverkiezing van de redactie. De hoofdredacteur of -redactrice kent aan de artikels en rubrieken in laatste instantie een min of meer grote oppervlakte toe die naar zijn of haar mening overeenstemt met de waarde van de thema’s en met de belangstelling van het publiek voor die thema’s.”
2. Except for the eighth photonovel, as discussed in Chapter 3.1.
3. With one exception: *Chez Nous* presented one additional photonovel, as seen in Chapter 3.3.
4. Interestingly, differences between the francophone and netherlandophone versions were not only limited to the photonovel sections. Small commercials varied or were placed on different pages. Full-page commercials were usually on the same page. Articles, even when the same, included or missed out pictures and had a different layout. The sewing patterns were always the same.
5. Serra, *Roman-photo*, 69.
6. Sullerot, “Photoromans,” 79.
7. The length of the story is a distinguishing feature between photonovels and film-photonovels, which were much shorter and generally reached only four episodes. It should be noted that film-photonovels were usually not serialized. The serialization only happened in magazines and in periods that were ‘dominated’ by the photonovel, conservatively holding on to the existing format at the expense of the new format. See Baetens, *Film Photonovel*.
8. Except for the photonovels directed by Jacques Van Melkebeke, as discussed in Chapter 3.5.
9. Mouchart, *Ombre de la ligne claire*, 186–187.
10. Sullerot notices how, similarly to *Femmes d’Aujourd’hui / Het Rijk der Vrouw*, readers of this magazine were avid readers of photonovels and expected a larger space dedicated to them instead of the usual two pages found in other magazines. Sullerot, “Photoromans,” 79.
11. This passage is quoted in Chapter 3.6.
12. Peeters, *Weekbladpers*, 152.
13. *Ibid.*, 83.
14. Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 56–63.
15. Turzio, *Fotoromanzo*, 122.
16. Jamil Dakhliia, “Propriétés et fonctions de la presse magazine,” in *Manuel d’analyse de la presse magazine*, ed. Claire Blandin (Paris: Armand Colin, 2018), 59–60.
17. Baudelot Christian and Anne Lebeau. “Les salaires de 1950 à 1975,” *Economie et statistique* 113 (July–August 1979): 16.

18. Peeters, *Weekbladpers*, 164–165.
19. Dakhliia, “Propriétés et fonctions,” 52, and Peeters, *Weekbladpers*, 45.
20. Peeters, *Weekbladpers*, 57–58.
21. Bernardes Habert, *Fotonovela*, 63.
22. Peeters, *Weekbladpers*, 58.
23. Dakhliia, “Propriétés et fonctions,” 60.
24. Sullerot, *Presse Féminine*, 73. Original text: “si les femmes sont dotées actuellement d’une presse di abondante et si luxueuse, c’est par la bonne raison que les spécialistes de la vente, dans presque tous les domaines de la vie économique, se sont rendus à cette évidence, que la femme fait les achats. Les trois quarts environ de l’ensemble des achats sont en effet effectués par les ‘ménagères’. Pour vendre il faut atteindre ces merveilleuses consommatrices.”
25. We lack documents to prove that there were in fact financial agreements between advertisers and authors of the editorials.
26. Sullerot, *Presse Féminine*, 229–230.
27. *Ibid.*, 234.
28. Jan Baetens, “Le paratexte du Ciné-Roman-Photo,” *Interférences littéraires/Littéraire interferences. Seuils/Paratexts, trente ans après* 23 (2019): 96.
29. Baetens, “Unoriginal photographs,” *History of Photography* 42, no. 2 (2018): 401.





# Conclusion

As a long-disregarded genre and phenomenon, the photonovel has too rarely been granted particular attention or been analyzed in depth, victim of the general disinterest and even scorn that for years plagued the sentimental press. Fortunately, the last few years have witnessed a change, with academic works starting to deal specifically with the photonovel, recounting its history and relevance, looking more closely at its specific image–text relations, mapping its existence today via fandoms, online communities and more takes on the genre. In this context, the present work has tried to fill the gap concerning the Belgian photonovel. It set out to answer the main question: “What is the Belgian photonovel?”, and then each chapter contributed differently to the effort of providing an answer as exhaustively as possible, tackling the topic from the perspective of cultural and material studies. The scope was to investigate, on the one hand, the phenomenon of the Belgian photonovel within its cultural and historical context, by highlighting its positioning within the changing society of the postwar period and its ties with the print culture of the time; on the other hand, the material aspects of the photonovel have been explored, highlighting its paper nature, its magazine format, its printing process and the craftsmanship required to create it.

This study has been built around a double research question. Is there such a thing as a Belgian photonovel (its own production structure and output, its own chronology, its own distribution network, a set of features that are common to the netherlandophone and francophone parts of the country)? And if so, does this Belgian photonovel differ from the dominating traditions, that of Italy, where the genre was launched in 1947, and that of France, which translated, adapted and appropriated the Italian examples in order to cater to a different audience? In the case of Belgium, it is of course the comparison with France that should come to the fore, given the close linguistic and cultural connections between the two countries (it is for instance symptomatic that even today, at a moment where the traditional photonovel has almost disappeared from the public sphere, most railway newsstands in Belgium continue to have the mythical French weekly *Nous Deux* on their shelves). However, the influence of the Italian production cannot totally be put between brackets: a journal like *Grand Hôtel*, the Italian model of the French *Nous Deux*,

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was widely read over various decades in Italian immigrant communities in Belgium. The specific features of the Belgian photonovel can be summarized as such: the later appearance of the photonovel and its long run (longer than the French photonovel); the presence of bilingualism; the absence of magazines entirely dedicated to (complete) photonovels, preferring the format of the women's weekly; the seamless coexistence of original and imported photonovels; suspenseful and humoristic traits of many of the photonovels made by Belgians (though without becoming satire); the uniqueness of Serra's 'chic' photonovels, characterized by a higher budget, a clear involvement from the editors of the magazine and an effort to target a middle-class audience; the presence of French freelance technicians in the teams creating photonovels, who brought to Belgium their own expertise in the field; and the link with the world of comics, seen especially when considering Jean-Michel Charlier, Jacques Van Melkebeke and Jean-Pol, active also in the field of photonovels.

Since photonovels are not 'pure' works of art, freely moving between a wide range of cultural and material environments in time and space, this study has taken as its point of departure the detailed analysis of a certain number of technical questions, mainly concerning photography and painting, but also an in-depth reflection on the photonovel market, which was that of the family magazines, more particularly of those magazines that included photonovels on a more or less regular basis. This point immediately lays bare a fundamental difference with the French model. In France photonovels tended to circulate in specialized magazines, weeklies or monthlies, even if these publications generally included more material than just the photonovels (letters to the editor, horoscopes, advertisements, etc.). Belgium did not have magazines that were exclusively devoted to photonovels, except for instance those magazines that were simply translated (the Italian company Lancio had for example several francophone and netherlandophone series, but this part of the production for sale in Belgium is not considered 'Belgian' in the current study). This lacuna is easily understandable: many French magazines were available on the Belgian market and it was difficult to compete with them.

Besides, the Belgian family photonovel magazines were less linked with the subsector of the women's weeklies than was the case in France. A Belgian producer such as Dupuis, publisher of among others *Bonnes Soirées*, explicitly promoted its own photonovels, which started to appear one decade after the first Italian and French examples and definitely under pressure from that competition with the immensely successful new photonovel genre, as radically different from the foreign, yet actively imported, models. Belgian photonovels were presented as family entertainment, they were not risqué like the French works and could thus be read by young girls without any danger, they were morally above suspicion (one should not forget that even a couple of years before, the French photonovel business had been under severe ideological attack by right-wing as well as left-wing witch hunters). Belgian photonovels were also not devoid of humor, often of the self-parodying

kind. In this, they are typically Belgian, since most Belgians like poking fun at themselves (probably a good way of going on living with a strong sense of cultural inferiority). And they do not limit themselves to the favorite photonovel tendency towards melodrama. Detective stories were popular in Belgium, yet never the hard-boiled type that became fashionable in France after the launch of the *Série noire*, just after World War II.

However, the Belgian production is not only a softer and gentler, more thematically diverse and definitely less serious type of photonovel. It is also a strand that aims at a higher cultural status. Not that of the artistic experiment – for this, we will have to wait for the astonishing breakthrough realized by Marie-Françoise Plissart in the 1980s, in her ground-breaking collaboration with scriptwriter Benoît Peeters – and, by the way, all of their works were published by the avant-garde publishing company les Éditions de Minuit and targeted the upscale book market in Paris. Rather it aims at the status of a special type of middle-brow serious entertainment: the adaptation of literary classics and contemporary bestsellers. This type of photonovel was not new in itself. It had started in Italy as early as the 1950s and the pioneering feminist scholar Evelyne Sullerot, who was also deeply committed to the field of comics, equally known for its woman-unfriendly and patriarchal biases, was one of the first to recognize the esthetic and cultural ambitions and achievements of this type of photonovel, made by excellent photographers having at their disposal a trained technical staff and a sufficient, although still rather modest, production budget.

Since it was not possible for the Belgian producers to have a return on investment on the small Belgian market alone, even taking into account the almost systematic translation of their work into the other national language, which doubled both the audience and the sales figures (photonovels were as popular in Flanders as in francophone Belgium), these more sophisticated productions could only be commissioned by magazines with a strong French distribution. This was the case for the Brussels *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* (“Modern Women”), which took the smart decision to outsource its production and to hire a French professional, Hubert Serra, allowing him to work not in a studio (or in the kitchen or living-room of the actors, as was often the case in the vernacular Belgian production), but on location: a photonovel whose setting was Bruges was shot in Bruges; the adaptation of *Madame Bovary* was shot in and near Rouen; exotic adaptations were made in India, etc.

To study the Belgian photonovel, its history and position in the larger Belgian magazine market, this book did not choose the formal, thematic and narrative close-reading approach that characterizes much of the existing scholarship. Nor did it emphasize the ideological or political reading of the material, also and rightfully well represented in the literature on the field. It opted instead for a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods, combining a broad overview of the Belgian family magazine market during the period of the classic photonovel with a series of visits to archives both small and large, some of them belonging to the ‘rogue archives’ field as created, maintained and shared by

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fans and amateurs, but also with informal discussions and talks with historical witnesses and trips to ongoing exhibitions and curation projects in Belgium and abroad. Key in this regard was the collaboration with the National Library in Brussels (KBR), which has realized a pioneering digital archive of the Belgian photonovel production. Without the support of the KBR team, it would never have been possible to reach a nearly complete overview of the production and to find a workable procedure for the data management of a corpus that proved much larger than expected.

Further research could take multiple forms, but the four following perspectives come immediately to the fore. First of all, a full-fledged 'oral history' approach to the genre, which will help give a more precise idea of the actual reception, often reduced to purely quantitative elements. We may know in most cases the print run of the magazines and have a more or less precise idea of their circulation, but what about the actual readers' experiences? Second, the supersession of the narrowly national approaches to the genre, which should be more than the juxtaposition of various national and linguistic traditions. The photonovel has been and continues to be, if not a global, at least a transnational phenomenon, and it is urgent to go beyond a vision of the genre that remains exclusively indebted to the idea that only French and Italian models are characteristic of the genre as a whole. Third, it will undoubtedly prove extremely useful to establish relationships between photonovel studies and other, transversal fields and questions, for instance gender studies (it does not suffice to repeat over and over again that photonovels testify to old-fashioned ideas on relationships between man and woman) or magazine studies (a very thriving research field, which has the advantage of having a sharp eye for transnational influences and exchanges). And fourth, but certainly not last, the many challenges and opportunities created by the shift from analog to digital publication formats, a transformation that may open the field of photonovel studies up to new and broader forms of interdisciplinarity. Photonovels may become a wonderful laboratory for the collaboration between popular culture and literary scholars, but also between information specialists, gender and queer researchers, sociologists and digital humanists, without forgetting of course historians of various orientations. I can only hope that this book will prove capable of advancing not only interest in the photonovel but its study in an open and multidirectional perspective.

Now that the corpus has been described and there is a basic understanding of what the Belgian photonovel is, one can hope that further research will fill in the gaps and enrich the study of this fascinating genre, in its Belgian context. While an historical approach is more common among the studies done on photonovels, which tend to focus on the origins of the genre, its birth and evolution, the famous names of publishers and actors, and its historical context, studying the material and print nature of the photonovel is no less important. This work has thus hopefully contributed to showing the relevance of such an approach in the study of the photonovel.

# Appendix

## Complete list of all the photonovels published in Belgian magazines

Lectures d'Aujourd'hui		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
1	<i>Rendez-vous à Amboise</i>	07/08/1954-01/01/1955
2	<i>Le champion bien-aimé</i>	02/10/1954-12/02/1955
3	<i>Belle comme le jour</i>	12/02/1955-16/07/1955
4	<i>Ton cœur guérira</i>	18/06/1955-01/10/1955
5	<i>L'amour est un songe</i>	08/10/1955-11/02/1956
6	<i>Pilote d'essai</i>	11/02/1956-05/05/1956
7	<i>Mademoiselle justice</i>	03/03/1956-23/06/1956
8	<i>Méditerranée</i>	23/06/1956-22/09/1956
9	<i>La promesse du passé</i>	08/09/1956-23/02/1957
10	<i>Tiphaine, mon amour</i>	02/02/1957-08/06/1957
11	<i>Notre amour est sans issue</i>	01/06/1957-26/10/1957
12	<i>Le fleuve argent</i>	12/10/1957-15/02/1958
13	<i>L'Orgueilleuse</i>	22/02/1958-21/06/1958
14	<i>Le chalet de l'espoir</i>	14/06/1958-18/10/1958
15	<i>Mon chauffeur bien-aimé</i>	18/10/1958-21/02/1959
16	<i>Le fantôme de l'étang bleu</i>	14/02/1959-20/06/1959
17	<i>Une fille nommée Anne</i>	20/06/1959-17/10/1959
18	<i>Mon petit paysan</i>	24/10/1959-20/02/1960
19	<i>La vérité ignorée</i>	20/02/1960-25/06/1960
20	<i>Malgré tout je t'aime</i>	25/06/1960-08/10/1960

## Appendix

Lectures d'Aujourd'hui		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
21	<i>Unis par une dette</i>	15/10/1960-04/02/1961
22	<i>Le portrait de l'autre</i>	04/02/1961-10/06/1961
23	<i>La fille à la cravache</i>	10/06/1961-07/10/1961
24	<i>Ce dieu que l'on nomme Amour</i>	23/09/1961-06/01/1962
25	<i>Nathalie, mon amour</i>	10/02/1962-23/06/1962
26	<i>Le choix douloureux</i>	12/05/1962-25/08/1962
27	<i>L'Amour guérisseur</i>	30/06/1962-06/10/1962
28	<i>Béatrice et les mauvais garçons</i>	01/09/1962-22/12/1962
29	<i>Marianne de mon cœur</i>	13/10/1962-26/01/1963
30	<i>Le château de la Milady</i>	30/03/1963-27/07/1963
31	<i>Cœur de lune</i>	24/08/1963-07/12/1963
32	<i>L'Île des passions</i>	12/10/1963-18/01/1964
33	<i>Lac-aux-dames</i>	23/11/1963-08/02/1964
34	<i>Le clown de la mort</i>	14/12/1963-07/03/1964
35	<i>John, chauffeur russe</i>	01/02/1964-16/05/1964
36	<i>Les chaussons roses</i>	25/04/1964-27/06/1964
37	<i>La chatte noire</i>	25/07/1964-03/10/1964
38	<i>La grande mise en vente</i>	03/10/1964-19/12/1964
39	<i>Cœur blessé, cœur guéri</i>	10/10/1964-05/12/1964
40	<i>Les chemins de l'innocence</i>	07/11/1964-01/05/1965
41	<i>La nuit cramoisie</i>	12/12/1964-06/03/1965
42	<i>Le beau destin de Christina</i>	02/01/1965-27/03/1965
43	<i>Un piège dans la nuit</i>	13/03/1965-10/07/1965
44	<i>La dame aux œillets</i>	03/04/1965-03/07/1965
45	<i>Printemps à Rome</i>	29/05/1965-21/08/1965
46	<i>La petite fille qui veut la lune</i>	03/07/1965-25/09/1965
47	<i>L'aigle sur la sierra</i>	17/07/1965-11/12/1965
48	<i>A l'ombre des tamaris</i>	02/10/1965-15/01/1966
49	<i>Cœur captif</i>	18/12/1965-26/02/1966
50	<i>Le vengeur</i>	22/01/1966-23/04/1966
51	<i>La belle histoire d'Isabelle</i>	19/02/1966-06/08/1966
52	<i>L'Île enchantée</i>	09/04/1966-30/07/1966
53	<i>Katia</i>	30/04/1966-27/08/1966
54	<i>Tropiques</i>	30/07/1966-27/08/1966
55	<i>L'oiseau dans la cheminée</i>	13/08/1966-27/08/1966

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<b>Lectuur voor Allen</b>		
<b>#</b>	<b>Title of the photonovel</b>	<b>Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>
1	<i>Rendez-vous te Amboise</i>	07/08/1954-01/01/1955
2	<i>De geliefde kampioen</i>	02/10/1954-12/02/1955
3	<i>Uit liefde voor u</i>	12/02/1955-16/07/1955
4	<i>Troost u, mijn hart</i>	18/06/1955-01/10/1955
5	<i>Liefde is een droom</i>	08/10/1955-11/02/1956
6	<i>Proefpilot</i>	11/02/1956-05/05/1956
7	<i>Ridder Flora</i>	03/03/1956-23/06/1956
8	<i>De Boevenprinses</i>	30/06/1956-22/09/1956
9	<i>De belofte van het verleden</i>	15/09/1956-29/12/1956

<b>Mon Copain</b>		
<b>#</b>	<b>Title of the photonovel</b>	<b>Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>
1	<i>Aventure à Buenos Aires</i>	19/06/1955-02/10/1955

<b>Chez Nous</b>		
<b>#</b>	<b>Title of the photonovel</b>	<b>Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>
1	<i>Reviens, mon amour</i>	30/06/1955-03/05/1956
2	<i>Mon tendre amour</i>	10/05/1956-13/12/1956
3	<i>Prisonnière du passé</i>	13/12/1956-01/08/1957
4	<i>Pourtant le cœur n'oublie pas</i>	08/08/1957-19/12/1957
5	<i>Le manoir de la folie</i>	26/12/1957-08/05/1958
6	<i>Lumière sur les cœurs</i>	15/05/1958-02/10/1958
7	<i>Je n'étais qu'un paravent</i>	26/06/1958-17/07/1958
8	<i>Loin des studios</i>	24/07/1958-13/11/1958
9	<i>L'obsession du passé</i>	09/10/1958-08/01/1959
10	<i>Loin de vous, mon cœur pleure</i>	20/11/1958-05/03/1959
11	<i>La comédie est finie</i>	15/01/1959-20/08/1959
12	<i>La nuit du passé</i>	05/03/1959-30/07/1959
13	<i>Je ne croyais pas au miracle</i>	06/08/1959-17/09/1959
14	<i>Ames en peine</i>	27/08/1959-14/01/1960
15	<i>L'amour de Valérie</i>	24/09/1959-15/10/1959
16	<i>Cœurs aveugles</i>	22/10/1959-17/03/1960
17	<i>Quand vient le bonheur</i>	21/01/1960-11/02/1960
18	<i>L'appel du passé</i>	18/02/1960-10/03/1960



## Appendix

Chez Nous		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
19	<i>Les hauts de hurlement</i>	17/03/1960-02/06/1960
20	<i>Orietta</i>	24/03/1960-09/06/1960
21	<i>Ombre et lumière</i>	09/06/1960-07/07/1960
22	<i>Le déclin d'une étoile</i>	16/06/1960-21/07/1960
23	<i>L'heure de vérité</i>	14/07/1960-01/12/1960
24	<i>Le rêve brisé</i>	28/07/1960-25/08/1960
25	<i>L'imposture</i>	01/09/1960-19/01/1961
26	<i>Le triomphe de l'amour</i>	08/12/1960-05/01/1961
27	<i>Orage</i>	12/01/1961-15/06/1961
28	<i>A quelque chose malheur est bon</i>	26/01/1961-13/07/1961
29	<i>Incertitude</i>	22/06/1961-20/07/1961
30	<i>Au bout du fil</i>	20/07/1961-28/09/1961
31	<i>Vacances dans l'île</i>	27/07/1961-14/12/1961
32	<i>Les adolescents</i>	05/10/1961-25/01/1962
33	<i>L'éternelle poursuite</i>	17/05/1962-12/07/1962
34	<i>Mirage</i>	19/07/1962-02/08/1962
35	<i>Une simple histoire</i>	09/08/1962-06/09/1962
36	<i>Le retour du passé</i>	13/09/1962-29/11/1962
37	<i>L'affaire Warren</i>	29/11/1962-21/02/1963
38	<i>Au bord du gouffre</i>	21/02/1963-11/04/1963
39	<i>Fausse piste</i>	18/04/1963-30/05/1963
40	<i>Jours d'angoisse</i>	06/06/1963-20/06/1963
41	<i>Nuit sans étoiles</i>	27/06/1963-12/09/1963
42	<i>Rêves</i>	19/09/1963-12/12/1963
43	<i>Drame dans le ciel</i>	19/12/1963-05/03/1964
44	<i>Le mystérieux cristal</i>	12/03/1964-28/05/1964
45	<i>Calomnie</i>	04/06/1964-13/08/1964
46	<i>Un appel dans la nuit</i>	20/08/1964-10/12/1964
47	<i>La barrière</i>	17/12/1964-01/04/1965
48	<i>Valse triste</i>	08/04/1965-21/10/1965
49	<i>Serge et le sable</i>	28/10/1965-24/03/1966
50	<i>Nuit d'angoisse</i>	31/03/1966-21/07/1966
51	<i>Le mal d'aimer</i>	28/07/1966-08/09/1966
52	<i>Enigmes</i>	15/09/1966-13/10/1966
53	<i>Isabelle</i>	20/10/1966-19/01/1967

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Chez Nous		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
54	<i>Le bonheur est pour demain</i>	26/01/1967-25/05/1967
55	<i>Faux départ</i>	01/06/1967-05/10/1967
56	<i>Tendre Sylvie</i>	12/10/1967-25/01/1968
57	<i>Voies parallèles</i>	01/02/1968-23/05/1968
58	<i>T'oublier, mon amour</i>	30/05/1968-19/09/1968
59	<i>L'homme du passé</i>	26/09/1968-16/01/1969
60	<i>Le sire de Saint-Géry</i>	23/01/1969-20/03/1969
61	<i>La maison du passé</i>	27/03/1969-17/07/1969
62	<i>Angoisse</i>	24/07/1969-31/10/1969
63	<i>La voleuse</i>	07/11/1969-20/02/1970
64	<i>Cover-girl</i>	27/02/1970-12/06/1970
65	<i>Paul et l'absolu</i>	19/06/1970-09/10/1970
66	<i>Espions et chiffons</i>	16/10/1970-05/02/1971
67	<i>Kidnapping en sol mineur</i>	12/02/1971-04/06/1971
68	<i>Opération Kendo</i>	11/06/1971-08/10/1971
69	<i>Au hasard des rues</i>	15/10/1971-28/02/1972
70	<i>Vacances tous risques</i>	04/02/1972-02/06/1972
71	<i>Le dilemme</i>	09/06/1972-15/09/1972
72	<i>Les parasites</i>	22/09/1972-12/01/1973
73	<i>L'autre visage</i>	19/01/1973-13/04/1973
74	<i>Le complot</i>	20/04/1973-03/08/1973
75	<i>Corinne</i>	10/08/1973-30/11/1973
76	<i>La mare au diable</i>	07/12/1973-05/04/1974
77	<i>Le vol vers le soleil</i>	12/04/1974-09/08/1974
78	<i>La nuit de la Saint-Jean</i>	16/08/1974-29/11/1974
79	<i>Le coup de foudre</i>	06/12/1974-14/03/1975
80	<i>Jeux dangereux</i>	21/03/1975-27/06/1975
81	<i>Les vacances de la vieille dame</i>	04/07/1975-03/10/1975
82	<i>Le fugitif</i>	10/10/1975-26/12/1975
83	<i>Vacances en montagne</i>	02/01/1976-16/04/1976
84	<i>Le coffret japonais</i>	23/04/1976-06/08/1976

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Ons Volk		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
1	<i>Kom weer, geliefde</i>	30/06/1955-03/05/1956
2	<i>Tedere liefde</i>	10/05/1956-13/12/1956
3	<i>De gevangene van het verleden</i>	13/12/1956-01/08/1957
4	<i>Maar het hart vergeet nooit</i>	08/08/1957-19/12/1957
5	<i>Het kasteel der gekken</i>	26/12/1957-08/05/1958
6	<i>Licht op de harten</i>	15/05/1958-02/10/1958
7	<i>De kwellung van het verleden</i>	09/10/1958-08/01/1959
8	<i>Ik was slechts een windscherm</i>	09/10/1958-30/10/1958
9	<i>Ver van u treurt mijn hart</i>	20/11/1958-05/03/1959
10	<i>De komedie is uit</i>	15/01/1959-20/08/1959
11	<i>De nacht van het verleden</i>	05/03/1959-30/07/1959
12	<i>Ik geloofde niet aan een mirakel</i>	06/08/1959-17/09/1959
13	<i>Harteleed</i>	27/08/1959-14/01/1960
14	<i>De liefde van Valerie</i>	24/09/1959-15/10/1959
15	<i>Blinde harten</i>	22/10/1959-17/03/1960
16	<i>Wanneer het geluk komt</i>	21/01/1960-11/02/1960
17	<i>De roep van het verleden</i>	18/02/1960-10/03/1960
18	<i>Eenzamen op het waaihof</i>	17/03/1960-02/06/1960
19	<i>Orietta</i>	24/03/1960-09/06/1960
20	<i>Schaduw en licht</i>	09/06/1960-07/07/1960
21	<i>De val van een ster</i>	16/06/1960-21/07/1960
22	<i>Het uur van de waarheid</i>	14/07/1960-01/12/1960
23	<i>De verbroken droom</i>	28/07/1960-25/08/1960
24	<i>Het gemeen bedrog</i>	01/09/1960-19/01/1961
25	<i>De triomf van de liefde</i>	08/12/1960-05/01/1961
26	<i>Storm</i>	12/01/1961-15/06/1961
27	<i>Vreugde na smart</i>	26/01/1961-13/07/1961
28	<i>Onzekerheid</i>	22/06/1961-20/07/1961
29	<i>Aan de andere zijde</i>	20/07/1961-28/09/1961
30	<i>Vakantie op het eiland</i>	27/07/1961-14/12/1961
31	<i>De jonge meisjes</i>	05/10/1961-25/01/1962
32	<i>De eeuwige achtervolging</i>	17/05/1962-12/07/1962
33	<i>Hersenschim</i>	19/07/1962-02/08/1962
34	<i>Een eenvoudig verhaal</i>	09/08/1962-06/09/1962
35	<i>Het verleden herleeft</i>	06/09/1962-29/11/1962

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Ons Volk		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
36	<i>De zaak Warren</i>	29/11/1962-21/02/1963
37	<i>Op de rand van de afgrond</i>	21/02/1963-11/04/1963
38	<i>Het dwaalspoor</i>	18/04/1963-30/05/1963
39	<i>Dagen van angst</i>	06/06/1963-20/06/1963
40	<i>Nacht zonder sterren</i>	27/06/1963-12/09/1963
41	<i>Dromen</i>	19/09/1963-12/12/1963
42	<i>Drama in de lucht</i>	19/12/1963-05/03/1964
43	<i>De geheimzinnige kristal</i>	12/03/1964-28/05/1964
44	<i>Laster</i>	04/06/1964-13/08/1964
45	<i>Een oproep in de nacht</i>	20/08/1964-10/12/1964
46	<i>De hindernis</i>	17/12/1964-01/04/1965
47	<i>Droevige wals</i>	08/04/1965-21/10/1965
48	<i>Serge en de edelmoedige redder</i>	28/10/1965-24/03/1966
49	<i>Een angstige nacht</i>	31/03/1966-21/07/1966
50	<i>Liefdepijn</i>	28/07/1966-08/09/1966
51	<i>Raadsels</i>	15/09/1966-13/10/1966
52	<i>Isabel</i>	20/10/1966-19/01/1967
53	<i>Het geluk is voor morgen</i>	26/01/1967-25/05/1967
54	<i>Laat me niet alleen</i>	01/06/1967-05/10/1967
55	<i>Liefde met hindernissen</i>	12/10/1967-25/01/1968
56	<i>De weg tot elkaar</i>	01/02/1968-23/05/1968
57	<i>Ik kan je niet vergeten, liefste</i>	30/05/1968-19/09/1968
58	<i>De man uit het verleden</i>	26/09/1968-16/01/1969
59	<i>De heerser van Saint-Gery</i>	23/01/1969-20/03/1969
60	<i>Het huis uit het verleden</i>	27/03/1969-17/07/1969
61	<i>Dagen van angst</i>	24/07/1969-31/10/1969
62	<i>De dievegge</i>	07/11/1969-20/02/1970
63	<i>Fotomodel</i>	27/02/1970-12/06/1970
64	<i>Paul en de liefde</i>	19/06/1970-09/10/1970
65	<i>Modespionage</i>	16/10/1970-05/02/1971
66	<i>De man met de snor</i>	12/02/1971-04/06/1971
67	<i>Operatie Kendo</i>	11/06/1971-08/10/1971
68	<i>Zwerftocht zonder doel</i>	15/10/1971-28/01/1972
69	<i>Gewaagde vakantie</i>	04/02/1972-02/06/1972
70	<i>Misdaad als hinderpaal</i>	09/06/1972-15/09/1972

## Appendix

<b>Ons Volk</b>		
<b>#</b>	<b>Title of the photonovel</b>	<b>Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>
71	<i>De parasieten</i>	22/09/1972-12/01/1973
72	<i>De kidnapping</i>	19/01/1973-13/04/1973
73	<i>Het komplot</i>	20/04/1973-03/08/1973
74	<i>Corinne</i>	10/08/1973-30/11/1973
75	<i>De duivelspoel</i>	07/12/1973-05/04/1974
76	<i>Vlucht naar de zon</i>	12/04/1974-09/08/1974
77	<i>De Sint-Jansnacht</i>	16/08/1974-29/11/1974
78	<i>Kronkelpad der liefde</i>	06/12/1974-14/03/1975
79	<i>Liefde en toeval</i>	21/03/1975-27/06/1975
80	<i>De vakantie van de oude dame</i>	04/07/1975-03/10/1975
81	<i>De vluchteling</i>	10/10/1975-26/12/1975
82	<i>Vakantie in de bergen</i>	02/01/1976-16/04/1976
83	<i>Het Japanse doosje</i>	23/04/1976-06/08/1976

<b>Femmes d'Aujourd'hui</b>		
<b>#</b>	<b>Title of the photonovel</b>	<b>Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>
1	<i>Les chevaux du diable</i>	24/03/1960-11/08/1960
2	<i>Torrents</i>	18/08/1960-01/12/1960
3	<i>Jan Yvarsen</i>	15/12/1960-20/04/1961
4	<i>Rembrandt</i>	27/04/1961-05/10/1961
5	<i>Le marquis des îles d'or</i>	12/10/1961-08/03/1962
6	<i>La moisson de sel</i>	22/02/1962-07/06/1962
7	<i>La meilleure part</i>	22/03/1962-02/08/1962
8	<i>La châtelaine de Mont-Mellyn</i>	14/06/1962-01/11/1962
9	<i>Mirandella</i>	09/08/1962-13/12/1962
10	<i>Saison sèche</i>	08/11/1962-21/02/1963
11	<i>Plus haut que les nuages</i>	31/01/1963-13/06/1963
12	<i>Lake, qui es-tu?</i>	28/02/1963-20/06/1963
13	<i>Escale au Portugal</i>	20/06/1963-21/11/1963
14	<i>Le vent violent</i>	27/06/1963-31/10/1963
15	<i>Marjorie des neiges</i>	07/11/1963-26/03/1964
16	<i>La lande sans étoiles</i>	28/11/1963-30/04/1964
17	<i>Les années d'illusion</i>	02/04/1964-10/09/1964
18	<i>Gare aux sorcières</i>	07/05/1964-24/09/1964

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<b>Femmes d'Aujourd'hui</b>		
<b>#</b>	<b>Title of the photonovel</b>	<b>Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>
19	<i>Piège pour une nurse</i>	17/09/1964-14/01/1965
20	<i>Jane Eyre</i>	01/10/1964-08/04/1965
21	<i>Le rendez-vous d'Essendilène</i>	21/01/1965-08/07/1965
22	<i>Valse brillante</i>	15/04/1965-19/08/1965
23	<i>Le garçon maudit</i>	15/07/1965-23/12/1965
24	<i>L'Autre Annabel</i>	26/08/1965-27/01/1966
25	<i>La grande crevasse</i>	30/12/1965-02/06/1966
26	<i>L'Etoile du Sud</i>	03/02/1966-09/06/1966
27	<i>Tropiques</i>	09/06/1966-28/09/1966
28	<i>L'Oiseau dans la cheminée</i>	16/06/1966-26/10/1966
29	<i>Sarn</i>	05/10/1966-22/03/1967
30	<i>Un feu dévorant</i>	02/11/1966-12/04/1967
31	<i>Le jour des diablasses</i>	29/03/1967-13/09/1967
32	<i>L'Epée de justice</i>	19/04/1967-20/09/1967
33	<i>Etrangers aux paradis</i>	20/09/1967-07/02/1968
34	<i>Le chemin le plus long</i>	27/09/1967-07/02/1968
35	<i>Je connais mon amour</i>	14/02/1968-03/07/1968
36	<i>Le capitaine Fracasse</i>	10/07/1968-16/10/1968
37	<i>Graine au vent</i>	25/09/1968-25/12/1968
38	<i>L'auberge de l'Estereel</i>	23/10/1968-29/01/1969
39	<i>Rayon mariage</i>	01/01/1969-09/04/1969
40	<i>Le cœur se trompe</i>	05/02/1969-04/06/1969
41	<i>Fuite sans retour</i>	04/06/1969-17/09/1969
42	<i>Rendez-vous à Portimao</i>	27/08/1969-07/01/1970
43	<i>Galop d'enfer</i>	24/09/1969-25/02/1970
44	<i>Jenny du tonnerre</i>	14/01/1970-03/06/1970
45	<i>Robin des bois</i>	04/03/1970-12/08/1970
46	<i>Le radeau de papyrus</i>	05/08/1970-02/12/1970
47	<i>Sara Dane</i>	25/11/1970-24/03/1971
48	<i>La fin du voyage</i>	17/03/1971-29/09/1971
49	<i>Bienvenu Mr Foley</i>	16/06/1971-10/11/1971
50	<i>Jody et le faon</i>	06/10/1971-08/03/1972
51	<i>Aimer c'est donner</i>	17/11/1971-12/04/1972
52	<i>Rhapsodie grecque</i>	15/03/1972-06/09/1972
53	<i>La dynastie des Ferrier</i>	19/04/1972-20/09/1972

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Femmes d'Aujourd'hui		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
54	<i>La jeune fille au collier de fer</i>	13/09/1972-10/01/1973
55	<i>Le portrait maudit</i>	10/01/1973-21/03/1973
56	<i>Les hauts de hurle-vent</i>	14/03/1973-29/08/1973
57	<i>Sauvage est la nuit</i>	22/08/1973-02/01/1974
58	<i>L'Étrange vérité</i>	19/12/1973-06/03/1974
59	<i>La citadelle</i>	27/02/1974-24/07/1974
60	<i>Au cœur de l'été</i>	10/07/1974-04/12/1974
61	<i>Le mur qui parle</i>	27/11/1974-19/02/1975
62	<i>Les jours meilleurs</i>	12/02/1975-25/06/1975
63	<i>Cissie</i>	18/06/1975-08/10/1975
64	<i>La renarde</i>	01/10/1975-31/12/1975
65	<i>La tulipe noire</i>	24/12/1975-28/04/1976
66	<i>Une vieille dame tricotait</i>	21/04/1976-11/08/1976
67	<i>Printemps finlandais</i>	11/08/1976-08/12/1976
68	<i>Le testament diabolique</i>	01/12/1976-22/03/1977
69	<i>Le destin de Robert Shannon</i>	15/03/1977-05/07/1977
70	<i>Les prisonniers de l'horizon</i>	12/07/1977-25/10/1977
71	<i>Les papillons de minuit</i>	01/11/1977-21/02/1978
72	<i>Un amour pour l'été</i>	28/02/1978-13/06/1978
73	<i>L'Echarpe de saphirs</i>	20/06/1978-10/10/1978
74	<i>Les feux écossais</i>	17/10/1978-13/03/1979
75	<i>Madame Bovary</i>	20/03/1979-10/07/1979
76	<i>L'ombre d'une femme</i>	17/07/1979-06/11/1979
77	<i>Les nuits de Bombay</i>	13/11/1979-04/03/1980
78	<i>L'Empreinte du dieu</i>	11/03/1980-01/07/1980
79	<i>L'Étalon blanc</i>	08/07/1980-28/10/1980
80	<i>Pure comme un lis</i>	04/11/1980-24/02/1981
81	<i>La dague vénitienne</i>	03/03/1981-23/06/1981
82	<i>Penmarric</i>	30/06/1981-02/03/1982
83	<i>Tempête sur Corfou</i>	09/03/1982-29/06/1982
84	<i>Orgueil et préjugés</i>	06/07/1982-02/11/1982
85	<i>Les eaux maléfiques</i>	09/11/1982-01/03/1983
86	<i>Le dauphin d'argent</i>	08/03/1983-19/07/1983
87	<i>Kaloni le navigateur</i>	26/07/1983-15/11/1983
88	<i>Aurore la vendéenne</i>	22/11/1983-13/03/1984

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<b>Femmes d'Aujourd'hui</b>		
<b>#</b>	<b>Title of the photonovel</b>	<b>Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>
89	<i>Pierre et Jean</i>	20/03/1984-10/07/1984
90	<i>L'Ile des tempêtes</i>	17/07/1984-06/11/1984
91	<i>Mandala</i>	13/11/1984-26/03/1985
92	<i>La ville maudite</i>	02/04/1985-13/08/1985

<b>Het Rijk der Vrouw</b>		
<b>#</b>	<b>Title of the photonovel</b>	<b>Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>
1	<i>Liefste Annick</i>	28/02/1957-27/06/1957
2	<i>Liefde zonder uitkomst</i>	04/07/1957-28/11/1957
3	<i>De zilveren stroom</i>	05/12/1957-03/04/1958
4	<i>Het trotse hart</i>	10/04/1958-07/08/1958
5	<i>De hut van de hoop</i>	14/08/1958-11/12/1958
6	<i>Mijn lieve chauffeur</i>	18/12/1958-16/04/1959
7	<i>Het spook van de blauwe vijver</i>	23/04/1959-20/08/1959
8	<i>Haar naam was Simone</i>	20/08/1959-24/12/1959
9	<i>De film en het hart</i>	31/12/1959-28/04/1960
10	<i>Verborgene waarheid</i>	05/05/1960-01/09/1960
11	<i>Liefde ondanks alles</i>	08/09/1960-15/12/1960
12	<i>Verenigd door een schuld</i>	22/12/1960-13/04/1961
13	<i>Rembrandt</i>	27/04/1961-05/10/1961
14	<i>Het meisje met de zweep</i>	13/07/1961-21/12/1961
15	<i>Heerlijk is de liefde</i>	28/12/1961-12/04/1962
16	<i>De zoutoogst</i>	22/02/1962-07/06/1962
17	<i>Nathalie, liefste</i>	19/04/1962-30/08/1962
18	<i>De kasteelvrouw van Mont-Mellyn</i>	14/06/1962-01/11/1962
19	<i>Genezing door liefde</i>	06/09/1962-13/12/1962
20	<i>Droog seizoen</i>	08/11/1962-21/02/1963
21	<i>Marianne, mijn geliefde</i>	20/12/1962-13/06/1963
22	<i>Lake, wie bent u?</i>	28/02/1963-20/06/1963
23	<i>Oponthoud in Portugal</i>	20/06/1963-21/11/1963
24	<i>Hoe fel is de wind</i>	27/06/1963-31/10/1963
25	<i>Marjorie, de ijsfee</i>	07/11/1963-26/03/1964
26	<i>De heide zonder sterren</i>	28/11/1963-30/04/1964
27	<i>Doktersroeping</i>	02/04/1964-10/09/1964



## Appendix

Het Rijk der Vrouw		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
28	<i>Pas op! Heksen!</i>	07/05/1964-24/09/1964
29	<i>Valstrik voor een nurse</i>	17/09/1964-14/01/1965
30	<i>Jane Eyre</i>	01/10/1964-08/04/1965
31	<i>Afspraak te Essendilène</i>	21/01/1965-08/07/1965
32	<i>Stralende wals</i>	15/04/1965-19/08/1965
33	<i>De "Ster van China"</i>	15/07/1965-23/12/1965
34	<i>De andere Annabel</i>	26/08/1965-27/01/1966
35	<i>De grote kloof</i>	30/12/1965-02/06/1966
36	<i>De zuiderster</i>	03/02/1966-09/06/1966
37	<i>De tropen</i>	09/06/1966-28/09/1966
38	<i>De vogel in de schoorsteen</i>	16/06/1966-26/10/1966
39	<i>Sarn</i>	05/10/1966-22/03/1967
40	<i>Een verterend vuur</i>	02/11/1966-12/04/1967
41	<i>Duivelinnedag</i>	29/03/1967-13/09/1967
42	<i>Het zwaard der gerechtigheid</i>	19/04/1967-20/09/1967
43	<i>Dokter onder de tropenzon</i>	20/09/1967-07/02/1968
44	<i>De langste weg</i>	27/09/1967-07/02/1968
45	<i>Ik ken mijn liefde</i>	14/02/1968-03/07/1968
46	<i>Kapitein Fracasse</i>	10/07/1968-16/10/1968
47	<i>Als een pluis in de wind</i>	25/09/1968-25/12/1968
48	<i>De uitspanning in de Esterel</i>	23/10/1968-29/01/1969
49	<i>Afdeling bruidjes</i>	01/01/1969-09/04/1969
50	<i>Een hart in nood</i>	05/02/1969-04/06/1969
51	<i>Vlucht zonder terugkeer</i>	04/06/1969-17/09/1969
52	<i>Tot ziens in Portimao</i>	27/08/1969-07/01/1970
53	<i>De helse galop</i>	24/09/1969-25/02/1970
54	<i>Drommelse Jenny</i>	14/01/1970-03/06/1970
55	<i>Robin Hood</i>	04/03/1970-12/08/1970
56	<i>Het vlot van papyrus</i>	05/08/1970-02/12/1970
57	<i>Sara Dane</i>	25/11/1970-24/03/1971
58	<i>Het einde van de reis</i>	17/03/1971-29/09/1971
59	<i>Welkom Mr. Foley</i>	16/06/1971-10/11/1971
60	<i>Jody en het hertejong</i>	06/10/1971-08/03/1972
61	<i>De mist trok op</i>	17/11/1971-12/04/1972
62	<i>De Griekse rapsodie</i>	15/03/1972-06/09/1972

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<b>Het Rijk der Vrouw</b>		
<b>#</b>	<b>Title of the photonovel</b>	<b>Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>
63	<i>De dynastie van de Ferriers</i>	19/04/1972-20/09/1972
64	<i>Het meisje met de ijzeren halsband</i>	13/09/1972-10/01/1973
65	<i>Het vervloekte portret</i>	10/01/1973-21/03/1973
66	<i>De woeste hoogte</i>	14/03/1973-29/08/1973
67	<i>Wild is de nacht</i>	22/08/1973-02/01/1974
68	<i>De vreemde waarheid</i>	19/12/1973-06/03/1974
69	<i>De citadel</i>	27/02/1974-24/07/1974
70	<i>Midzomer</i>	10/07/1974-04/12/1974
71	<i>Een list voor Sara</i>	27/11/1974-19/02/1975
72	<i>Morgen een mooie dag</i>	12/02/1975-25/06/1975
73	<i>Cissie</i>	18/06/1975-08/10/1975
74	<i>De vos duikt weg</i>	01/10/1975-31/12/1975
75	<i>De zwarte tulp</i>	24/12/1975-28/04/1976
76	<i>Het breilustige damekje</i>	21/04/1976-11/08/1976
77	<i>Lente in Finland</i>	11/08/1976-08/12/1976
78	<i>Het duivelse testament</i>	01/12/1976-22/03/1977
79	<i>Dokter Robert Shannon</i>	15/03/1977-05/07/1977
80	<i>Gevangenen van de zee</i>	12/07/1977-25/10/1977
81	<i>Middernachtvlinders</i>	01/11/1977-21/02/1978
82	<i>Een liefde voor de zomer</i>	28/02/1978-13/06/1978
83	<i>Het saffieren halssnoer</i>	20/06/1978-10/10/1978
84	<i>Het Schotse vuur</i>	17/10/1978-13/03/1979
85	<i>Madame Bovary</i>	20/03/1979-10/07/1979
86	<i>Schaduw van een vrouw</i>	17/07/1979-06/11/1979
87	<i>Nachten in Bombay</i>	13/11/1979-04/03/1980
88	<i>Het stempel van de God</i>	11/03/1980-01/07/1980
89	<i>Avontuur in Karinthië</i>	08/07/1980-28/10/1980
90	<i>Zuiver als de lelie</i>	04/11/1980-24/02/1981
91	<i>De Venetiaanse dolk</i>	03/03/1981-23/06/1981
92	<i>Penmarric</i>	30/06/1981-02/03/1982
93	<i>Storm over Korfoe</i>	09/03/1982-29/06/1982
94	<i>Trots en vooroordeel</i>	06/07/1982-02/11/1982
95	<i>Noodlottig water</i>	09/11/1982-01/03/1983
96	<i>De zilveren dolfijn</i>	08/03/1983-19/07/1983
97	<i>Kaloni de zeevaarder</i>	26/07/1983-15/11/1983

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Het Rijk der Vrouw		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
98	<i>Door liefde gered</i>	22/11/1983-13/03/1984
99	<i>Pierre en Jean</i>	20/03/1984-10/07/1984
100	<i>Het vogeleiland</i>	17/07/1984-06/11/1984
101	<i>Mandala</i>	13/11/1984-26/03/1985
102	<i>De verliefde detective</i>	02/04/1985-13/08/1985

Bonnes Soirées		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
1	<i>Mélie pour notre amour</i>	04/08/1957-29/09/1957
2	<i>Pour l'amour de Sophia</i>	13/10/1957-24/11/1957
3	<i>Cœur en péril</i>	01/12/1957-09/02/1958
4	<i>Amour en révolte</i>	16/02/1958-04/05/1958
5	<i>Retour de flamme</i>	11/05/1958-17/08/1958
6	<i>Mystérieux amour</i>	17/08/1958-05/10/1958
7	<i>Un mannequin a disparu</i>	12/10/1958-24/02/1959
8	<i>La porteuse de pain</i>	01/03/1959-08/07/1959
9	<i>Opération Amsterdam</i>	08/07/1959-02/09/1959
10	<i>Jeu, amour et bruyère</i>	12/08/1959-30/09/1959
11	<i>Tête folle</i>	07/10/1959-03/02/1960
12	<i>Lumière dans la nuit</i>	10/02/1960-16/03/1960
13	<i>Chantage à l'amour</i>	23/03/1960-20/07/1960
14	<i>Le remords d'une mère</i>	05/10/1960-01/02/1961
15	<i>La fille des ondes</i>	08/03/1961-21/06/1961
16	<i>Au repos des archanges</i>	04/10/1961-14/02/1962
17	<i>Colomba</i>	25/04/1962-01/08/1962
18	<i>Deux cœurs pour un secret</i>	10/10/1962-09/01/1963
19	<i>Le hasard frappe deux fois</i>	03/04/1963-15/05/1963
20	<i>Torrent d'amour</i>	12/06/1963-31/07/1963
21	<i>Chante pour moi, Nady</i>	14/08/1963-18/09/1963
22	<i>Deux cœurs à l'ombre des épées</i>	09/10/1963-04/12/1963
23	<i>Amour perdu</i>	04/12/1963-11/03/1964
24	<i>Des bijoux pour Nadine</i>	18/03/1964-24/06/1964
25	<i>La clause secrète</i>	14/10/1964-16/12/1964
26	<i>L'impossible trahison</i>	21/04/1965-25/08/1965

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<b>Bonnes Soirées</b>		
<b>#</b>	<b>Title of the photonovel</b>	<b>Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>
27	<i>La maison du mystère</i>	06/08/1967-01/10/1967
28	<i>Une biche aux abois</i>	22/10/1967-31/12/1967
29	<i>Etait-ce une illusion</i>	07/01/1968-31/03/1968
30	<i>Tu n'es plus celle que j'aimais</i>	07/04/1968-14/07/1968
31	<i>Sonate pour un amour brisé</i>	21/07/1968-20/10/1968
32	<i>L'autre moi-même</i>	27/10/1968-19/01/1969
33	<i>L'héritage de Paracelse</i>	26/01/1969-27/04/1969
34	<i>Le destin était muet</i>	04/05/1969-03/08/1969
35	<i>Le chantier de l'amour</i>	10/08/1969-28/09/1969
36	<i>Les mystères de Paris</i>	05/10/1969-30/11/1969
37	<i>Le dernier courage</i>	07/12/1969-25/01/1970

<b>Mimosa</b>		
<b>#</b>	<b>Title of the photonovel</b>	<b>Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>
1	<i>De melodie der liefde</i>	04/08/1957-29/09/1957
2	<i>Strijd om Sophia</i>	13/10/1957-24/11/1957
3	<i>Meisjes en smokkelaars</i>	01/12/1957-09/02/1958
4	<i>Harten in opstand</i>	16/02/1958-04/05/1958
5	<i>Het geheim van Jules Tercy</i>	18/05/1958-24/08/1958
6	<i>Liefde vol geheim</i>	24/08/1958-12/10/1958
7	<i>Een mannequin verdwenen</i>	19/10/1958-25/02/1959
8	<i>Bloemen brengen geluk</i>	18/03/1959-10/06/1959
9	<i>Filmster gevraagd</i>	17/06/1959-14/10/1959
10	<i>Het dolle avontuur</i>	21/10/1959-02/03/1960
11	<i>Het geheim van een moeder</i>	23/11/1960-29/03/1961
12	<i>De onbekende stem</i>	10/05/1961-23/08/1961
13	<i>De club der engelen</i>	04/10/1961-14/02/1961
14	<i>Twee harten &amp; een geheim</i>	10/10/1962-09/01/1963
15	<i>Tweemaal kwam het toeval ter hulp</i>	03/04/1963-15/05/1963
16	<i>Liefde in de branding</i>	19/06/1963-31/07/1963
17	<i>Zing voor mij, Nady!</i>	14/08/1963-18/09/1963
18	<i>Liefde in de schaduw van het zwaard</i>	09/10/1963-04/12/1963
19	<i>Verloren geluk</i>	04/12/1963-11/03/1964
20	<i>Juwelen voor Nadine</i>	18/03/1964-24/06/1964

## Appendix

Mimosa		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
21	<i>De geheime clausule</i>	14/10/1964-16/12/1964
22	<i>Het onmogelijke verraad</i>	21/04/1965-25/08/1965
23	<i>Moord op de Kralingenhoeve</i>	06/08/1967-01/10/1967
24	<i>Als een in 't nauw gedreven hinde</i>	22/10/1967-31/12/1967
25	<i>Was het een droom?</i>	07/01/1968-31/03/1968
26	<i>Jij bent niet meer dezelfde</i>	07/04/1968-14/07/1968
27	<i>Sonate voor een verloren liefde</i>	21/07/1968-20/10/1968
28	<i>Als in 'n spiegel</i>	27/10/1968-19/01/1969
29	<i>De erfenis van Paracelsus</i>	26/01/1969-27/04/1969
30	<i>En het noodlot zweeg</i>	04/05/1969-03/08/1969

Piccolo		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
1	<i>Bestemming liefde</i>	15/05/1960-02/10/1960
2	<i>De terugkeer</i>	09/10/1960-19/02/1961
3	<i>Liefde op het ijs</i>	26/02/1961-23/04/1961
4	<i>Geliefde Josiane</i>	11/06/1961-13/08/1961
5	<i>Revanche match</i>	20/08/1961-22/10/1961
6	<i>Droombeeld</i>	29/10/1961-31/12/1961
7	<i>De groene vrucht</i>	07/01/1962-11/03/1962
8	<i>De vlucht</i>	18/03/1962-20/05/1962
9	<i>De gril</i>	27/05/1962-22/07/1962
10	<i>Verboden</i>	29/07/1962-04/11/1962
11	<i>Twee Parijsiennes</i>	11/11/1962-06/01/1963
12	<i>En het hart weifelt</i>	13/01/1963-17/03/1963

Tiptop		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
13	<i>De storm</i>	24/03/1963-11/08/1963

Vrouw en Huis		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
1	<i>Het geweten spreekt</i>	15/09/1960-20/10/1960
2	<i>Spoorloos verdwenen</i>	08/12/1960-05/01/1961

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Vrouw en Huis		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
3	<i>Spionage op 't atoomcentrum</i>	12/01/1961-23/02/1961
4	<i>De regenbui had schuld</i>	23/02/1961-23/03/1961
5	<i>Liefde is een offer waard</i>	14/09/1961-26/10/1961
6	<i>Een vreemde ontvoering</i>	22/11/1962-07/02/1963

Panorama		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
1	<i>L'inspecteur apprend la musique / De inspecteur neemt muziekles</i>	19/09/1961-02/01/1962
2	<i>Invitation à la mort / Afspraak met de dood</i>	09/01/1962-13/03/1962
3	<i>Debrouillez vous seul Mister Ferguson / Knap het alleen op, Mister Ferguson</i>	20/03/1962-17/07/1962
4	<i>In extremis / In extremis</i>	17/07/1962-06/11/1962
5	<i>L'inspecteur chasse les courants d'air / De inspecteur en de ongreijpbaren</i>	13/11/1962-12/03/1963
6	<i>Bye, bye, Mister Bird! / Bye, bye, Mister Bird!</i>	19/03/1963-09/07/1963
7	<i>Ferguson se déguise / Ferguson vermomt zich</i>	16/07/1963-12/11/1963
8	<i>Le yacht à la quille d'or / Het jacht met de gouden kiel</i>	19/11/1963-17/03/1964
9	<i>Ferguson préfère les roses / Ferguson kweekt liever rozen</i>	24/03/1964-28/07/1964
10	<i>La malédiction du masque d'or / De vloek van het gouden masker</i>	11/08/1964-15/12/1964

Rosita		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
1	<i>Annie et son metteur en scene / De regisseur van haar leven</i>	20/02/1962-13/11/1962
2	<i>Le bonheur attend à Portofino / Het geluk wacht in Portofino</i>	20/11/1962-06/08/1963
3	<i>Quand l'œil de lune sera brûlé / Als het maneog zal branden</i>	03/09/1963-31/03/1964
4	<i>La mélodie du passé / Melodie uit het verleden</i>	07/04/1964-27/10/1964
5	<i>L'amour tient la vedette / De hoofdrol is voor jou</i>	03/11/1964-25/05/1965
6	<i>Le jour que le cirque vint / Toen het circus kwam</i>	01/06/1965-07/12/1965
7	<i>Un visage surgit du passé / Het gezicht uit het verleden</i>	14/12/1965-28/06/1966

## Appendix

Ons Land met Iris		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
1	<i>Eerste liefde ...</i>	05/01/1963-02/03/1963
2	<i>Maar het lot nam de beslissing</i>	04/05/1963-17/08/1963
3	<i>En toen kwam het onweer ...</i>	24/08/1963-07/12/1963
4	<i>Genezende liefde</i>	14/12/1963-11/04/1964
5	<i>Het kind met de viooltjes</i>	18/04/1964-22/08/1964
6	<i>De ondankbare</i>	15/05/1965-18/12/1965
7	<i>De liefde kent twee gezichten</i>	25/12/1965-18/06/1966
8	<i>Jahângir</i>	29/10/1966-01/04/1967
9	<i>Ik ben onschuldig</i>	08/04/1967-02/09/1967
10	<i>Noodlottige afspraak</i>	09/09/1967-03/02/1968
11	<i>Een vrouw die uit de hemel viel</i>	10/02/1968-27/07/1968
12	<i>Het grote geheim</i>	03/08/1968-18/01/1969
13	<i>Achter de schermen</i>	25/01/1969-12/07/1969
14	<i>Een moeilijke keuze ?!</i>	19/07/1969-03/01/1970
15	<i>Schijn en werkelijkheid</i>	10/01/1970-26/09/1970
16	<i>Het mooiste sprookje ter wereld</i>	03/10/1970-19/03/1971
17	<i>Ik deed het voor jou</i>	26/03/1971-10/09/1971
18	<i>Het kind van de foto</i>	17/09/1971-25/02/1972
19	<i>De secretaresse</i>	03/03/1972-21/07/1972
20	<i>Vakantie vol verrassingen</i>	28/07/1972-22/12/1972

Madame		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
1	<i>Emilie d'Aurenche</i>	01/1966-03/1967
2	<i>Imogène Jane</i>	04/1967-07/1968

Joepie		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
1	<i>De lange weg naar de grote liefde</i>	08/08/1973-26/12/1973
2	<i>Mix en Max in actie!</i>	09/01/1974-01/05/1974
3	<i>Geen liefde zonder tranen</i>	15/05/1974-21/08/1974
4	<i>De ware liefde ontloop je niet</i>	16/10/1974-22/01/1975
5	<i>Eerlijk duurt het langst, ook in de liefde</i>	12/03/1975-19/05/1975
6	<i>Als vijf gekke jongens eenzaam en verlaten zijn</i>	16/07/1975-06/08/1975

Complete list of all the photonovels published in Belgian magazines

Joepie		
#	Title of the photonovel	Publication dates (dd/mm/yyyy)
7	<i>Een bewogen vakantie om nooit te vergeten</i>	05/11/1975-24/12/1975
8	<i>Afspraak volgende zomer</i>	19/09/1976-28/11/1976
9	<i>Zover zou het nooit komen</i>	29/03/1987-03/05/1987
10	<i>Ze wilde hem zo graag vertrouwen</i>	24/05/1987-28/06/1987
11	<i>Er was slechts een probleempje</i>	02/08/1987-23/08/1987
12	<i>Alleen maar goede vrienden?</i>	20/09/1987-25/10/1987
13	<i>Lastig als je zo verlegen bent</i>	08/11/1987-13/12/1987
14	<i>Zoiets mag nooit gebeuren</i>	07/02/1988-13/03/1988
15	<i>Een fan van Samantha</i>	01/05/1988-05/06/1988
16	<i>De jongen van de advertentie</i>	24/07/1988-28/08/1988
17	<i>Kingsbrook</i>	04/09/1996-22/09/1999
18	<i>De wilgenwijk</i>	29/09/1999-06/08/2003
19	<i>Verboden liefde</i>	08/10/2003-31/12/2003
20	<i>Dubbel spel</i>	07/01/2004-10/03/2004
21	<i>De wilgenwijk extra</i>	17/03/2004-02/06/2004
22	<i>Gebarsten spiegelbeeld</i>	09/06/2004-28/07/2004
23	<i>Verborgene geheimen</i>	04/08/2004-26/02/2014





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# Acknowledgments

The author of a book is always a group, and this book is no exception to this rule. Without the help of many people, my manuscript would never have made it into this final step, and I am very grateful to all those who helped me make this possible: the members of the Photo-Lit team (Jan Baetens, Luciano Curreri, Michel Delville, Luca di Gregorio, Sébastien Hermans, Frédéric Lemmers, Fred Truyen), whose encouragements and advice have been crucial; the supervisor and co-supervisor of my thesis (Jan Baetens and Fred Truyen); the two anonymous reviewers of the manuscript and the editorial team at Leuven University Press; Bruno Takodjerad, Jean-Pol and Frédérique Deschamps, who agreed to share their knowledge on the photonovel with me; all those who with great generosity granted me the authorization to reproduce the images that I hope give a real feel and touch of the corpus: Michel Courant and Richard Olivier, as well as the publishing companies Dupuis and Roularta; and finally all those who accompanied me with their love and support during the research and writing of this work.

